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University of California
Berkeley, California

Louise M. Davies

FROM QUINCY TO WOODSIDE: MEMORIES OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

With Introductions by
Cornelius Buckley, S.J.
and
Samuel B. Stewart

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
1983 - 1985

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LOUISE M. DAVIES

Photograph by Michael Collopy

By Michael Taylor
Chronicle Staff Writer

Louise M. Davies, the quintessential San Francisco benefactor who gave the city a \$5 million symphony hall and showered millions more on local charities, died yesterday at the age of 98.

Mrs. Davies died at The Sequoias, a retirement home in Portola Valley, not far from her beloved estate in Woodside.

Her husband, oil millionaire Ralph K. Davies, for whom the



Louise Davies was called "Elan," meaning "style," her granddaughter said.

medical center in San Francisco is named, died in 1971.

Mrs. Davies later said she and her husband believed that their

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children should not receive a bigger inheritance than was good for them. And so she decided to give away a great deal of the family fortune.

"She was a pretty wild thing, kind of like 'The Unsinkable Molly Brown,'" her granddaughter, Lucy Dreyer, said yesterday. "When she came into a room, you knew there was a new and fresh element. They used to call her 'Elan,' meaning 'style.'"

It was the kind of style that brought a novel candor to the stuffy world of the cloistered rich.

"She never played a role and she said whatever she thought, which I greatly admired," her grandson, Ralph Davies Lewis, said yesterday. "When she gave money for the symphony hall, a magazine asked her why she gave it. 'Because I had it' is what she told them. She was real grass roots, tied right down to the ground."

She was, in the words of a Jesuit priest who was clearly bowled over by her, "a tornado of compassionate energy." But it was the kind of energy and compassion that to Mrs. Davies seemed like second nature.

"I had the money, and we certainly needed that hall," she said in 1980 of the symphony's new home on Van Ness Avenue, the big showcase that was ultimately named for her.

At first, she gave \$4 million for the hall's construction. She later gave an additional \$1 million when more bills from the contractors came in. And then, in a gesture to fill the hall with quality music, she ponied up \$3 million to attract top-flight visiting conductors.

All this came from a woman who grew up on a farm in Plumas County and rode her buckskin pony, Dolly, to school. When her parents got divorced, Mrs. Davies

went to convent school in Rio Vista and, after graduating, took a job as a stenographer in Oakland for \$25 a week.

Since childhood, she had thought she would either be a nun or a movie actress and so, after seven years in the anonymity of Oakland, she set out for Los Angeles to give the movies a try. But her plans for stardom got sidetracked after she was introduced to Ralph Davies.

They were married in 1925. Although he didn't have much money, he was working for Standard Oil and had already set his sights on the presidency of the company. By the beginning of World War II, he was vice president. He spent the war years as petroleum administrator for Interior Secretary Harold Ickes.

When the war ended, he returned to Standard Oil but was not made president of the company, so he quit and went out on his own.

In time, he made millions of dollars by independently buying oil concessions all over the world. Ralph Davies eventually ran American President Lines and the Natomas Co.

Mrs. Davies continued her husband's tradition of giving away millions.

In 1990, on the eve of her 90th birthday, she was interviewed in her home in Woodside and confided: "I'm just learning after all these years that I have quite a lot of money. Isn't that something?"

"She had no idea how much she was worth," Dreyer said, "and when she found out, she became a big benefactor to San Francisco."

In addition to contributions to the symphony and the medical center, she also gave \$1 million to the University of San Francisco.

Yesterday, symphony officials mourned her passing.

"Louise M. Davies was a great

person and a great friend of the orchestra," said Peter Pastreich, executive director of the symphony. "Getting to know Louise and seeing the happiness she got from her benefactions has been one of the pleasures of my life with the San Francisco Symphony."

Nancy Bechtle, president of the symphony board, said, "She was a wonderful part of the Symphony. Probably the crowning glory of her life was that hall, and every time she walked in, she was just thrilled to be there. She sat in the center of the front row and just got a real kick out of the whole thing."

And Mayor Willie Brown said, "Louise Davies was one of the main benefactors of the cultural arts of San Francisco. She was truly a generous woman. The money she and her family made evidences itself in Davies Hall, Ralph K. Davies Medical Center and other facilities around the city."

Mrs. Davies is survived by a daughter, Maryon Davies Lewis, of San Francisco; five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Services are scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday at St. Pius Church, 1100 Woodside Road, Redwood City.

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INTRODUCTION

By Cornelius Buckley, S.J.

I was both flattered and honored to have been asked to write a few introductory remarks to Louise Davies' memoir. At first I planned to describe this close and dear friend of mine through quip and anecdote. I thought about recounting in a good-humored way my first meeting with this family friend when she came to Paris where I was living some twenty years ago. Readers of her memoirs would have enjoyed learning how, in a matter of a few days, she became a succès fou all over the West Bank--at the vernissage of a young artist, who to this day owes his success to her generosity; at a sidewalk cafe, which easily could have fit into the First Act La Fille du régiment; and in the center of the bustling, night crowds flowing down the Boulevard Saint-Germain to the Seine and beyond. Louise loves to play. She loves a good time and, totally forgetful of herself, she wants everyone else around her to enjoy life to the fullest.

But soon I found this introduction to her life's story had a will of its own and I found I was not able to sustain a frivolous tone throughout this essay. Mere light-heartedness would never do justice to her personality nor to her achievements. At the same time, this fiercely individualistic, humane and charming woman is one who does divert as well as edify. One need not be a Boswell to suggest that Louise would feel ill at ease standing on a pedestal, and I know that she would have great sport with suggested nimbi, unless of course they resembled the bird-hat she wears at Tahoe. So, with muted good humor, much love, and recalling what Cromwell told his portraitist about painting warts and all, I recall these few off-beat impressions from "My Life With Louise."

One warm summer morning she invited me down from the University of San Francisco, where I teach history, to join her for breakfast. We sat at a patio table shaded by generous branches of an oak and engulfed by the summer scents of her Woodside garden. The day's mail arrived with the coffee. Immediately she put aside her cup and began attacking the impressive pile of letters before her, reading each aloud, commenting on all, and then letting them drop singly into neat stacks at her feet. Later she would lovingly gather them up and answer each one in large script on blue stationery. Of course, there was hardly a piece in this sizable correspondence that was not a plea from some worthy group. Presently the telephone began to ring. She would jump up and listen to one voice after another making yet more entreaties for philanthropic causes. "Well, wasn't that nice of you to call?" she would say as she rang off one pleader after another. "You made my day!"

As I watched the toast cool to match the tepid coffee, I realized, as I never had before, that Louise Davies does indeed live in an atmosphere of The Appeal. Fascinated, I studied her surrounded by Good Causes and I listened to her as she coped with urgent solicitors.

Well I knew of her disinclination to have a secretary screen mercy-distributing groups and culture-spreading organizations, and so I found myself wondering: Couldn't one easily excuse her if she flung all of this mail unopened into the wastebasket? And who could blame her for answering the telephone abruptly, cynically? Just as the oak tree shading our table would surely wither in an incessant gale, shouldn't Louise's charity eventually grow cold in such an excess of opportunities for doing good? As for all these entreaties that poured down like continuous rain, must they not eventually put out the flame of philanthropy? No, I directed my answer to the oak, not for Louise: Louise exists for the purpose of doing good.

On February 8, 1982 I found myself thinking once again of this breakfast meeting. Meanwhile she had lavished the University of San Francisco with gifts, and thanks to her generosity the St. Ignatius Institute, an integrated liberal arts curriculum in the Jesuit tradition, had been founded and was flourishing on the campus. Now USF was honoring her, and standing at the podium she was trying to read in poor light a statement she had spent much time preparing. She had told me that it summed up her philosophy on giving. "People ask me why I gave to the [Davies] Symphony Hall," she began. "Well, the answer is simple: we needed the Hall and I had the money." And she continued:

Never did I dream that people would be so responsive, so kind, so generous with their approval and their thanks! On the street, in the grocery stores, bakeries--almost every time I go downtown I am stopped by complete strangers saying how much they enjoy the Hall, and thanks! I am surprised and delighted. People are delighted. It creates a bond between us. I have fallen in love with my fellow man. The idea of giving yourself to something must be as old as man. We are born with the spark. The spark however has to be ignited to create a fire. I remember when I was a girl scout we had to make a spark by rubbing two sticks together; then we blew and coaxed the spark into a flame. Such is the way of all our hopes and dreams. This is a pretty deep way of saying what it has meant to me to be giving. You see, I have thought about it quite a lot. I have wondered myself. I hope everyone has the joy, has the thrill if you will, of being involved in some enterprise or idea that gives others the feeling that you care. You do this without expecting reward, save and except the wonderful glow in your heart.

Now that is vintage Louise. There are many people who donate to charitable causes and there are countless foundations set up for the purpose of lending a hand to worthy activities. But however munificent, the hand is

sometimes a cold one. When Louise gives, whether it is a million dollars or a handful of flowers from her garden, it is always a personal act. She never separates herself from the person or the cause that receives her gift. In this respect she shares the wisdom of the saints who know better than the rest of us the joy of giving and whose hearts expand with the same wonderful glow that Louise knows so well.

She is a tornado of compassionate energy, but few know its source. I feel that I do. A number of years ago I used to turn out a regular column for Catholic newspapers. Louise always made it her business to comment on what I had written. She was always full of praise, thanks to her congenital charity which can never believe wickedness in anyone. On one occasion when I reflected in my column on the need for silence in one's life, Louise was particularly receptive. In her peculiar brand of unself-conscious piety she confessed that every night before retiring she spent some time in quiet reflection, and that frequently during her busy day she would pause to acknowledge the presence of God in her life. Some people who see only the external are apt to judge her to be an ingenuous, distracted woman--and these are qualities that account for much of her charm. But those who know her well realize that she has levels of great mystery and contemplation where she lives in communication with God, in frequent conversations with Him. A reader of these memoirs will be struck by how important her religion is to her; indeed it is the source of her goodness and places her actions into perspective.

The unique personality and ultimate vocation of each of us are not compromised by embroidery nor by fancy. They are only put into clearer focus. For this reason I have no problem imagining Louise, after she has answered the morning mail and taken the last telephone call, sitting alone with God in the autumn twilight at that same table where we breakfasted many summers ago. As she contemplates the oak tree's branches bending to the evening breeze, I wonder if she does not have thoughts similar to those of the Irish poet William Butler Yeats when he reflected:

The wind is old and still at play
While I must hurry upon my way
For I am running to Paradise.

Cornelius Buckley, S.J.

October 1986
Department of History
University of San Francisco
San Francisco, California

INTRODUCTION

By Samuel B. Stewart

The key structure of San Francisco's Performing Arts Center is the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall, which appropriately bears the name of the lady who made the largest individual gift toward the cost of construction.

The complex of buildings, now known as the Performing Arts Center, includes the War Memorial Opera House, the Veterans Building with its Herbst Theatre, Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall, Harold L. Zellerbach Rehearsal Building, the Opera House Annex, and the San Francisco Ballet Building--all located in the blocks West of City Hall on Van Ness Avenue. The Opera House and the Veterans Building were completed in 1932, and from that date until 1980 the Opera House was the home of Symphony, Opera, and Ballet. During the early years it served them all well and even provided facilities for traveling attractions which needed a theatre of more than 3,200 seats. By 1965, however, it was apparent to those who had the responsibility for providing classical music performances in San Francisco that the 1932 buildings were no longer adequate to meet the needs.

The Symphony season began in December and continued through May. The Opera required the hall for rehearsals throughout the summer and was selling out its capacity for a season which began immediately after Labor Day and lasted until the start of the Symphony season in December. The Ballet could not put on a continuous season and had to squeeze its offerings into vacant dates during the Symphony season. There was no time at all for other attractions which needed a large hall. There were more than 500 performances and rehearsals in each 365-day year.

It was apparent that the city had to have additional facilities or these tremendously popular musical forms would be drowned in the sea of their own success.

An effort was made in 1965 to pass a city bond issue which would have finished the project as then envisioned to the extent of \$29 million dollars. Such a bond issue in San Francisco must be approved by two-thirds of the voters. Popular as the attractions were, a two-thirds vote could not be mustered to put the cost on the tax rolls.

Several years passed while the situation became more and more critical. Finally, in 1973 a group of citizens organized a non-profit corporation called Sponsors of San Francisco Performing Arts Center, Inc., the purpose of which was to do the planning, raise the needed money, obtain a suitable site, deal with the political problems, supervise the construction of suitable buildings, and arrange for their future management in a manner which would serve the music-loving public.

It was an ambitious program. It took more than ten years of dedicated effort by a volunteer board of directors and more than \$40 million dollars, of which \$30 million dollars was provided by over 6,000 individual, corporate, and private foundation gifts. Of those generous gifts, without which the project would not have been possible, the largest single gift (\$5 million dollars) was made by Mrs. Louise M. Davies, a most gracious and generous lady whose support of the Symphony and other worthwhile causes in the San Francisco Bay Area has greatly enhanced the quality of life here. More recently, Mrs. Davies has made a pacesetting \$3 million dollar gift to the Symphony's \$22 million dollar Permanent Endowment Fund.

Anyone who has had experience in raising large sums of money for non-profit volunteer organizations knows only too well that the key to success is obtaining a large pacesetting gift which will stimulate the generous instincts of the many people whose small gifts are also necessary for success. Louise M. Davies was the pacesetting music lover who provided that stimulus to the San Francisco Performing Arts Center and to the Symphony's Permanent Fund. Her generosity set a challenging financial example for other supporters, but perhaps even more important, her obvious joy and satisfaction in helping to provide cultural opportunity and pleasure for others has been inspirational to the whole community.

Subsequent to the completion of the Performing Arts Center project (Symphony Hall, Rehearsal Building, and Opera House Annex) as planned by Sponsors, other groups provided the planning and funding for the Ballet Building, Herbst Theatre and Performing Arts Center Garage. The whole neighborhood has enjoyed a renaissance and improvements with fine residential and other new buildings attracted by the Performing Arts Center.

One of the most pleasant and rewarding experiences of my life was the opportunity that Mrs. Davies' generosity afforded me to get to know Louise Davies and to observe the graciousness and modesty with which she accepted the acclaim of the people who enjoyed her beneficence.

At one press conference she was asked why she made such a large gift. Her simple, straightforward answer was: "Well, I had it!"

She did not limit her support to the gift of large sums of money. She has served on the boards of the Symphony and Opera, as well as on the Board of Sponsors, and has generously participated in fundraising affairs such as the Symphony's Christmas event called "Deck the Halls" in which she has appeared as "Mrs. Santa Claus."

At the final performance of the opening week in Davies Symphony Hall, in September 1980, the conductor was Yehudi Menuhin, and the final selection on the program was the "Toy Symphony." Several of the people who had

played important roles in the building of the Performing Arts Center were asked to play "toy" instruments such as ratchet, nightingale, trumpet, drums. Louise played the triangle--as she does everything else--with enthusiasm and fun. One of my associates on the Board of Sponsors once commented:

If we had gone out and searched the
world over to find a person to
symbolize the Performing Arts Center,
we could not have found a better
symbol than Louise Davies.

How true!

Samuel B. Stewart, President
Sponsors of San Francisco
Performing Arts Center, Inc.

September 1986
Bank of America Center
San Francisco, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Louise Davies was one of five children brought up by her divorced and later remarried mother, Katherine Chandler Stivers. For Louise, her mother was a model of a good mother, and a survivor. Louise was sent to a Catholic boarding school where she embraced the faith, and dreamed of acting. She was a secretary when she met and married Ralph K. Davies, the doted-upon son, one of the five children of Nellie Waldron Davies. A high-school educated boy, Ralph made good in his rise from gas station attendant to become vice-president of Standard Oil, deputy director of the Petroleum Administration, director of American Independent Oil Companies, director of American President Lines, etc.

But the Louise Davies whom San Francisco knows made her mark on the city when she gave \$4 million in 1978, and then another million, to create a symphony hall. That story is in the oral history--as well as in the preceding introductions by Cornelius Buckley and Samuel Stewart. Louise abbreviates the decision in her telling of it to such a degree--"I did it because I had the money"--as to make it rank with Sir Edmund Hilary's decision to climb Everest, "because it was there." And in 1980 Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall was there, thanks to Louise. It was a reality, and its benefactress continues to endow its musicians and conductors, and attends performances as she has since 1934.

In none of the publicity at the opening of the Hall, in none of the many interviews, did Louise Davies do full justice to her own instinctive generosity. Time and again, face to face with her own accomplishments she would say, "But isn't that what anyone would have done?" or make some equivalent demural. Our motivation for the oral history was to do justice to Louise Davies by documenting the life history of this person who, as Mr. Stewart suggests in his introduction, is by some seen as a symbol.

In the fall of 1982, at the suggestion of James E. O'Brien, a member of the Council of The Friends of The Bancroft Library, we proposed to Louise Davies taping an autobiographical memoir. To discuss this, James D. Hart, director of The Bancroft Library, and I went to meet Louise, in January 1983. She was interested in the work of The Bancroft Library, and interested in doing her story, "for her children." So, after a lunch capped by a flaming Christmas pudding, we made a date to start the interviews a few weeks later.

Nineteen hours of tapes were done between February 1983 and February 1985, always in Woodside, in the handsome Anshen and Allen house discussed in the memoir. I arrived from my drive down scenic Highway 280, turned in past neighbor Shirley Temple Black's, came down the private road with its "Careful, Children at Play" sign, into the parking circle. Lining the

flagged entryway were pots of flowering plants to admire. The place always had an air of festivities about-to-be, or just-had-been. Inside there were the traces, the balloons and bouquets, of yesterday's reception or garden tour.

We sat at a long table by a window in the front of the house where we had coffee and talked and taped. Lunch would come along and we would adjourn to the dining room, or out of doors to eat. The house is an easy, pleasant place to be. Houses do reflect their owners, and this one was comfortably full of memorabilia, art, color, hats, pillows, pictures, souvenirs. But on the other hand one could sympathize with the two painters who arrived one day to give an estimate on a small job and left agog at the height of the rooms, and the scale of the interior.

It was always an oral history of Louise Davies we were doing. That's what she wanted and what her daughters wanted. In 1976, five years after her husband's death, the volume Ralph K. Davies As We Knew Him, "Biographical recollections and remembrances of RKD as man and businessman, contributed by associates, friends and family," was compiled and privately printed. Excerpts from that book chosen to show more of the Davies family life are appended here. Louise could feel pleased that Ralph's book had been done; the Oral History was her history.

Writing an interview history is the interviewer's chance to reflect on the interview process. It is not long at all before the tape recorder is only a muted witness to the relationship. And like most women, Mrs. Davies had to feel that she was learning as much about her interviewer as I was learning about my subject. The trick was to put that off until lunch. But it is certainly true that whatever happened to Our Book, as she called it, the experience of doing it was going to be the most important part, for her. Just recently I came across a quote in an article titled "What is Social about Oral History." The author says: "Talk about events is much more than data for the derivation of history: it is also a cultural production in its own right, a mode of communicating, a surfacing of meaningfulness that binds past and present together."*

My impressions of Louise Davies, who is so thoughtfully pictured by Father Buckley, are that she is fun to be with, outgoing, unselfish, open to new ideas and new people, willing to entertain and to be entertained by whatever and whoever is passing through her life. She is dependable and supportive--qualities she admired in her mother. She answers her own phone, deals with demands on her time and money with graciousness--and with the help of financial advisors and allies Phil Hudner and Don Crawford. Her charity is as deep as her faith. She is neither awed nor awesome.

*Samuel Schrager, University of Pennsylvania, in International Journal of Oral History, 1983.

And if, as we say in our introductory letter to an interviewee, oral history is "simply a conversation, held in a person's home or office, in which he or she tells about the important events . . . they took part in or observed," Louise Davies' oral history is a model. Because of her instinctive spontaneity and willingness to confide, however, the interviews have been edited to a degree in order that Louise be comfortable with them in the end, in the written form. Again like most of us, vis a vis the interested listener with the smiling, open face, we feel encouraged and applauded for insights which for all their pertinence and accuracy at the moment, should not see the printed light of day.

Nevertheless, edited as it has been, the oral history sounds just like Louise--the staccato style, switches of subject, interrupting herself with reflective remarks, redirecting the conversation to the listener--it's all there.

Going through my correspondence file I see that the Regional Oral History Office became, from 1983 to 1986, in a small way headquarters for Louise Davies lore. In March 1983 we passed on some epigrammatic Davies material to Mr. Ziggy Stone for his production of a "One Minute" of Louise Davies for KRON-TV. In August 1984 we prepared seven pages of Louise Davies oral history material from the transcribed interviews for the use of Charlotte Painter in her book (with Pamela Valois) Gifts of Age (Chronicle Books, 1985).

In that same correspondence file are about a dozen and a half notes in a large script on 5 x 8 blue paper--Louise's communications, seldom a complete sentence, but always "with love." Hails and Farewells from her travels. Interview meeting plans. There is an invitation to the Wattis Room of Davies Symphony Hall, followed by an evening of the San Francisco Ballet across the street at the Opera House, preceded by a visit to the Firehouse and a tour of the memorabilia there. That dazzling evening was not an unusual night in the city for Louise, and a sample of how inexhaustible she is (though she acknowledges ruefully that she runs around too much and quotes her doctor on the subject), and how open (if not demanding) are the arms of the world she runs around in.

Louise Davies' first reaction to the edited transcript was great distress. She received it in 1985, and the blue notes turned to panic. She could not bring herself to read the draft. But by August 1986, after we presented it to her in a retyped format, it was read and accepted. "It's really quite a tale," she said, "too long and too detailed--but I enjoyed every page!"

The last page, the last words in the oral history, are in essence and style pure Louise Davies. At our request she wrote her own Postscript. Now our last word is to thank Mrs. Davies for her faith in the outcome of all this talk, and to thank--as she would wish--Samuel Stewart and Father Cornelius Buckley for their fine introductions to Louise M. Davies.

Suzanne B. Riess
Interviewer/Editor

December 1986
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name LOUISE MAY DAVIES

Date of birth MAY 23 1900 Place of birth QUINCY PLUMAS

Father's full name George MARION STIVERS

Birthplace Quincy Calif.

Occupation Farmer

Mother's full name Catherine Chandler

Birthplace IOWA U.S.A.

Occupation _____

Where did you grow up? QUINCY, CALIF + OAKLAND Cal

Present community Woodside, Ca. + Seattle, Wash

Education High School ~~and~~

Occupation(s) Worked for seven years as a stenographer
for MANY different people - one was secretary to secretary
to Mayor of OAKLAND - Two years for IXL Quasha Lin

Special interests or activities HAVE Had a desire to be an
actress - Have been in many amateur plays before my
MARRIAGE TAKE A GREAT INTEREST in MUSIC + PAINTING
AND in a similar way POLITICS

Louise Davies

I LOUISE STIVERS

Small Town Girl

Davies: I think that many people who have made a dent in the world, even a small dent, have come from small towns, a lot of them from the middle west, and this is because they have to think independently. In fact the first suffragette in the whole United States came from Greenville, right up there near Quincy. People from a small town have to be independent, have to think independently, because there's no one else to do it. You're on your own. Particularly farmers, who have to do everything for themselves.

Look, I walked five miles to school; I think it does something for your morale if you have to struggle as a child, to get to school five miles away, even on horseback or something, or if you grow up in a family where they're all making decisions on their own every day.

Riess: You were born in 1900 in Quincy, Plumas County. How was it that your family was there?

Davies: My Grandfather Chandler came there in 1852, from Iowa. He was a farmer, and Quincy was a farming place, in the beginning. Quincy is a little place, surrounded by mountains, just like Switzerland. I think that people, even though they left a place, tend to go to another place that's similar. My aunt who lived there, she married a Gansner who came from Berne, Switzerland. Imagine, to go to Quincy from Berne, Switzerland. Those Gansners came earlier, in 1842.

I lived with my Aunt Gansner. I had diphtheria when I was about ten or twelve, so I lived in Quincy much longer than anyone else in my family. Actually, when I was about seven my mother left my father, and we went back to Sacramento. But I went back when I was about ten and spent two years living this country life. I was supposed to be delicate. [laughs] Is anybody delicate anymore?

Riess: You had brothers and sisters?

Davies: Yes. There were five of us. First I had a sister named Marion. Marion was named for my father, George Marion Stivers. (Stivers is a Dutch name.) So my mother named her first daughter for her husband. Now Marion was a delicate lady. Truly.

The longer I live, the more I realize it's true--and Wallace Stegner said this--that we are born with certain things that we can't change. I said, "Fifty percent," and he said, "No, ninety." I've now gone up to seventy percent. Why are we all so different in our own family? It's those genes. You are born with them.

We grew up in a man's world. My husband certainly was very much the head of the family, yet someone would always say, "Well, you were a part of it." I'd say, "No, I wasn't a part of it at all. I was just there." He had it in him. I didn't add anything to it, except that I was there. You know what I mean?

They'd say, "But do you think he could have done it without you?" I'd say, "Well, even if he married another woman, unless she'd diverted him entirely, which I don't believe would be possible, he was determined to be a success, since he was a little boy." He was. He really had direction.

Riess: And what were you determined to be?

Davies: Oh. Let me see. I was thinking the other day that when I was about ten or twelve somebody took me to see St. Elmo. It was a melodrama. So I grew up thinking that I was going to be an actress, forever. Now I have three grandchildren who want to be actors and they all tell me it's my fault! That's Cappy [Rush], and Lucy [Lewis]. Though Lucy writes, she could act. And Ralph [Lewis] is interested also.

This thing that you start in with as a child does kind of influence you. One grandson, for instance, since eight years old he wanted to be an astronaut. He was the youngest jet pilot in the world at nineteen--he's now twenty. He said last year, "I may not be an astronaut, but I'm working on it." These things do happen, don't they?

Oh, I was going to be the greatest actress in the world. I went to a convent school, up in Rio Vista, and there we used to put on plays. We put on Greek plays and Shakespeare, and so forth.

We did As You Like It. I was always the lead, because I wanted to be, I guess. [laughs] Maybe I was good at it too. I don't know. But this has followed through, in a way.

I went to work when I was eighteen, and I was in many plays then, in Oakland, and I really thought I was pretty good. I liked acting. But I decided I would rather be married and have children. I had to make this decision within me. Maybe it was the only one I could make at the time.

Riess: What kind of group were you performing with in Oakland?

Davies: A Catholic church group, St. Jarlath's, in Fruitvale. They don't do it anymore. We put on plays, and then we'd go around the county and perform them. We weren't anything.

Riess: Where do you come in your family?

Davies: I'm the third daughter. The next one was a brother, and then another sister. They're all gone now. My mother moved us to Sacramento, and they weren't divorced then, but I guess they were having a bad time. Then my sister Marion died. She had her tonsils out; they didn't give her any antibiotics and she got pneumonia and died.

Talking about genes, this girl Marion was really born a saint. I know it. And I knew it when I was that high. We always went to church, but instead of praying to God, I prayed to Marion. Yes, I believe that people are born with certain attributes.

We lived in Sacramento until I was about nine or ten, and then my mother had the idea of going to Alaska. My mother was a very unusual person. Very unusual. Well, we didn't get any farther than Seattle, and we lived in Seattle for about a year. She took in roomers and boarders in Bellevue. In that time, 1909 or 1910, it was a great big country place. We had about five acres. We had cows and she milked the cows, and we delivered the milk. We had a lot of chickens. I remember she hatched 500 baby chickens and I used to peddle eggs and milk in Bellevue, Washington.

Riess: What was she going to do in Alaska?

Davies: That was the time of the Alaska Yukon Exposition. It was a boom. She was going up there; I don't know what she was going to do.

Ah, but I remember. My father was paying her alimony, and because there was a law, he wasn't going to pay her unless she came back to California. You see, we were out of state. So that's why we came to Oakland. Now I remember. It's a whole train of thought.

My mother was a remarkable person, a very strong person. There again I think it comes from this background of her father. He died when we were twenty-one or twenty-two, in Oakland, at the age of eighty-seven.

Interest in Acting

Riess: How is it that the theatre became so important to you? Did your mother take you to performances?

Davies: No, mother didn't take me anywhere. She thought I was a little odd. "What do you want to do that for?" It would never have occurred to her to go. I was enthralled by it all, and the opera.

I always liked music. The first time I went to an opera it was Tannhauser, and you know how long Tannhauser is, and I stood up the whole time. Afterwards I went down--all by myself mind you--to where they all were and waited and waited and waited to tell them, the people who were in it, how much I loved it. I used to do it all the time. I would stand outside for when they come out. Oh, I met Sarah Bernhardt, and another great actress. I'd say, "Oh, you're so wonderful." I just fell in love with the art in that way, the acting and the music and the opera. I saw Sarah Bernhardt I think at the Orpheum. In this play I remember she lay on the couch--she had lost her leg. Because I was so enthralled I waited outside for hours afterwards to see them.

Riess: Did you actually meet the great actress?

Davies: I did Sarah Bernhardt. She spoke to me, and she said something nice to me which kind of thrilled me. I think she was taking the part of a soldier in that play, who had lost a leg. That's why she could be on the couch.

Riess: Did you have music lessons?

Davies: My mother taught me. Mothers did a lot of that years ago. She could play a bit, and always played, and always sang a bit. It wasn't any big deal, as they say, but I took lessons, and after I got married I took lessons. I loved the piano. I don't play for anyone, but I just like music. It's very good for me. I did it for a long while, but I really didn't practice enough. Sometimes I'd play because I was happy, sometimes I'd play because I was lonesome, sometimes because I was mad. What drives you to things? People tell me, they say they get mad, and they'll go get the paintbrush and start to paint. Well, I go to the piano. It's an emotional thing. I've always liked it. None of the girls played.

I've begun to know those people at the Symphony. They started to be musicians when they were six years old, some of them. Very young. It's another dedication, and a complete love, isn't it? It's their whole life. They talk about love, and what does love mean? It means you are really dedicated. If you don't love, you're not dedicated.

Riess: Did you have art lessons, painting lessons?

Davies: No. My mother belonged to the era when all ladies went to a finishing school. She went to a school in Marysville. Her mother evidently was a great pianist. Compared to the women of those days, we seem awfully soft now. Is it because we have had too much? My aunt played the piano too. In those days it was necessary for a woman to learn how to cook, how to paint, how to sew, and some kind of musical instrument. They didn't go to college, it didn't occur to them to go, but that's what they did. Although Auntie Nell's sister-in-law went to Mills, Aunt Lena; she was a teacher.

That is a great family. They were younger than my mother. That family, the Gansner family, all went to Mills. Lena was a teacher in the grammar school. Her sister was a nurse and she was the head of the French Hospital. This is a long time ago, 1890 or something. The aunts were very remarkable women. Mills College must have started around then, 1880 or 1890. I have stacks of photographs where they are playing tennis, with high collars and long skirts.

I lived an awful lot in imagination. I was thinking about this. I hadn't thought of it for years; knowing you were going to come made me think about it. For the first fourteen years of my life I had two lives. I lived inside myself and out. Other people have done it. I have read someplace. Not everyone does but I've always, as far back as I can remember, had two lives, until I was fourteen. I guess it

stopped at the convent. I can remember at school the teacher would say, "Where are you? You're not here."

I kind of blamed my mother for my parents' divorce because, you know, my father had very likable qualities. [laughs] He also had a terrible temper. Other people have said that about their father and mother: they wonder why they couldn't have made it together. You can't understand. They both had very strong ideas and temperaments. In my marriage, my husband had strong ideas, so I retreated. But my mother would never retreat.

My husband had a very strong determination, and a wild temper. He squelched it, so nobody ever knew it. Nobody would ever know it; they would think he was never mad, but he was. It was because he had a lot of feeling. In a way it's a force that he put into other categories.

Riess: You did see something of your father?

Davies: Oh yes, every summer we'd go up to the ranch in Quincy and stay with him, my older sister Erma and myself. As I said, I lived with my Aunt Gansner, which was another farm, but I saw my father quite a bit because he was on the other farm.

Riess: Did you have some guidance from your mother about what you might be?

Davies: No. My mother, when I look at it now, she never told me anything. Now, when I start advising my girls, they say, "Just wait a minute. It's my life, not yours." My mother never told me a thing to do, but I thought with my girls that maybe I ought to say something. The only thing, when I was twenty-four and I was going out I remember my mother saying to me, "You're twenty-four years old. Don't you think you ought to settle down? If you want a family you ought to have children before you're thirty." That was the only direction she ever gave me, but it did make me think. I got married the next year. I wonder. To definitely say that to me, I thought, maybe it's true. I knew I wanted a family.

Convent School

Riess: Why did she choose a convent school [Sisters of Mercy] for you?

Davies: I don't know. I was fourteen and she had just married again; maybe I wasn't very nice to him. I don't know what it was.

She sent my other two sisters too, but I'm the only one who stayed there, who graduated. My sister Erma, it didn't affect her at all. But no, I really don't know why she sent us. I had gone a year to the Polytechnic High on Broadway in Oakland. Maybe it was because at that point she had gone away. People do what their parents have done. I don't think I was obstreperous. Maybe she thought it was a good idea, and in a way it was the best thing she ever did for me. I got a wonderful education and I got religion, as they say. It's guided my life. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. It gave me direction.

Riess: Tell me about that school.

Davies: I learned more in those four years about education, direction, in every way. The nuns were so dedicated, and so happy--contented. It made them strong women, really powerful women. You don't see much of it. A lot of people don't seem so dedicated. Most people I think lead somewhat fractured lives. I do myself. Yet I do seem to have a kind of drive. Since the last few years I never thought of it very much, but there is a direction, although you're not quite sure how you got there.

The Sisters of Mercy school was a good school. At Sisters of Mercy was when I became a Catholic, which has influenced my life more than anything. Thank goodness. I don't know what people do without a basis of belief, I really don't. You'd feel like a fish floating in the ocean. Maybe I'm all wrong. Maybe it's just me. Everybody has different wants, and different requirements in their life. It must be that way. You can't judge everybody by yourself. I think my mother used to say that. [chuckles]

Riess: Was your Catholic school like the school suggested in your granddaughter Lucy's play?

Davies: Oh, no. Nothing like that at all.

These nuns mostly came from Boston, or some other place, though one that didn't, the nun that influenced me most, was a San Francisco girl. In fact, she finally came out. She was too worldly and they asked her to leave. They were all individuals. You think of them as an order, but they were so individual. Sometimes when you join an order, you have to do so much that you get lost in the order. But

none of these were. The nun who influenced me, who left there, taught thirty years in San Francisco public schools.

Riess: What was her name?

Davies: Philomena Davis.

She influenced me the most, because she recognized something in me. She was really very dramatic, and we used to put on these plays, get our costumes from Goldstein, and she'd write the play.

Riess: That's how she influenced you, in dramatics rather than in religion?

Davies: Yes.

Riess: Did you have parties with boys?

Davies: No. They do that now, but they didn't then. Once or twice we all left in the middle of the night, meaning about eight o'clock, or nine, to go out and meet the boys, as I remember, in the graveyard. [laughs] They were all Portuguese up there, because it's full of asparagus, mostly asparagus. I remember those Portuguese boys. They all came to church, and they were always making eyes, looking at us or something. Of course the Sisters found it out, and we were chastised. We didn't have any social contact with them except if we made it ourselves. You know, the curiosity of both of us, I guess. This happens I'm sure in every convent.

Riess: Were there any restrictions on your reading there?

Davies: Oh, no. And one priest, Father McCarthy, who was really quite literary, would read to us one or two evenings a week. He read beautifully. We'd all get down on the floor, sit on something, it was all very casual, and he'd read to us from Edgar Allen Poe. I can see him now. To this day I can't read "The Pit and the Pendulum" without thinking of his voice. We'd get so excited about it, we'd almost think our necks were going to be cut off. That's the one I can remember, mostly. But he'd take classics and read them to us. I can't remember reading any of them myself, but I guess I did.

Riess: What was your uniform?

Davies: We had white middies and blue skirts.

Riess: And did you have to take care of them?

Davies: No, that was all done.

I remember once that all the nuns were out. Did I tell you this?

We knew they were going someplace, I don't know what; we invaded their quarters, and we put on all their things. We had a hilarious time. We were scared to death every minute they'd come back and see us. It was terrible of us. They wore the wimple, and everything, and we tried them on. Kids are kind of devils; we did all kinds of things.

Riess: Were you a leader?

Davies: No, I wasn't a leader at all. It wasn't all that big of a school. I can't even remember how many. A lot of girls came from those ranch families in Suisun, and were just day pupils, but twenty, maybe, or thirty.

Riess: So you really must have been a very close group then, the group of boarders.

Davies: Oh, yes. It's a long time ago. There's something I've learned from this oral history: you never forget anything, do you? Many things you don't want to remember exactly, I suppose, but you really never, never, push them out. They're always there, aren't they?

Riess: Do you keep up with any of the girls?

Davies: We used to, but I haven't for a long, long time. They have reunions; the last one I went to was about twenty years ago. We went, and I thought, "My goodness, I don't know anybody." After forty years, you change a lot. Finally, I discovered that I knew everybody, but they had just changed. The school actually closed in 1920, right after I left.

I don't know how my mother ever found that school in the first place, because she wasn't Catholic, although she was a very Christian woman. She used to go out to what we called the poorhouse, in Oakland. It's like Laguna Honda here. She loved to sew and she went out at least once a week, maybe twice a week, and sewed for those people out there. This was going back to her beginnings on the farm where she used to help the neighbor women when they were having children or were sick or something. She was always helping somebody; it was something she did.

When I was a little girl in Oakland, we would go to whatever church was around the corner. I loved my mother, and later it troubled me because I didn't want to go anyplace that my mother couldn't go. The nuns explained, "Anybody that is good, it doesn't matter whether you are Catholic, Hindu or what, they go to Heaven." I didn't want to be a Catholic unless my mother could go along to Heaven too. [laughs]

I decided I wanted to be a nun, but I got talked out of that. Then I took lessons. I went to a Franciscan father. One nun, I used to argue and argue with her and talk to her, because I really wanted to know what this was about before I became a Catholic. She said, "Look, you're being very emotional. After all you're only eighteen, and you better just think about this." I was sure, about that time, that I wanted to be a nun. I wanted to dedicate my life.

Memories of Quincy and Sacramento

Riess: When you think back to Quincy, what was the house like?

Davies: First of all, we lived on a ranch, the Cate Ranch, about five miles from Quincy. The Cates were the first people that settled it, that built it. (Like this Woodside home is the Moore Ranch. After we bought it and started building, all the stone and all the timber was sent to the Moore Ranch.) Then afterwards my father bought a ranch that was not far away. Then my grandfather built his own house. Not with his own hands. They had the red soil there, and so he made bricks out of the soil. The house is still very much there, a very nice house. With eaves, and so on. Every time I go up I go out to see it. It isn't as big as I thought it was, naturally, [laughs] but it's still there.

There was a big pasture out in front and they raised the wheat and the grain. The thing that I remember was the springhouse. When they milked the cows they'd bring in the pans of milk and you'd set it. The next day they would skim the cream off. Then the cream was made into butter. That springhouse is still standing, to my amazement.

Then we moved into town. I had all these brothers and sisters, of which I am the last one, who went to school in town.

Riess: Who lived in the brick house?

Davies: My mother and Aunt Nell. They had a brother who was the youngest and at the age of fifteen he died of cancer. They called it by a different name then, but it was cancer. It nearly killed the family. They wanted a son to carry the name on, and my mother would say how grieved Papa was to think he lost his only son. Girls were nice, but a son was very important.

Someday it might be nice to go up there and visit in Quincy. As a matter of fact, there is a very interesting museum up there. Fay Miller started it; she used to be my music teacher, going to school. I don't think she ever married, coming from this big family, but eventually she inherited some money. When she died she left the money for this museum. I've given back many things that I had because that's where they belonged.

My grandfather used to, twice a week, take his big four-horse team and go to Johnsville with his wheat and grain and potatoes. Later in life he came down and stayed with us. First of all he used to stay at the Hotel Taylor. Then he would come over. He would never tell us he was coming; my mother would just say, "Well, I think it's about time." He would spend the winter, and then spring and summer he'd go back up to Quincy. He left quite a lot of money, about two or three hundred thousand. That was a lot of money in those days particularly for being a farmer. He gave it to my mom; it was all hers, and she said, "If I'd had this when I needed it." But he wouldn't think of parting with it.

In his later life he used to loan money. Although I think the percentage was only five percent, evidently that's where he made all that money. Mama was astonished; we all were astonished. He was eighty-five, as I remember, and he'd been doing this for twenty years, being a kind of personal bank.

Riess: When did the money come into your family? Did it change your life?

Davies: No, not at all. I was working, and my mother remarried. Her second husband was just a carpenter before, and they went into the contracting business. They built all kinds of houses, dozens of houses, in Oakland. She supplied the money. That's where all the money went. But it didn't change my life one bit.

Riess: Then she was just like her own father.

Davies: I guess she was. Money comes hard to people, and when it comes hard, it goes hard. Actually that was not true with Ralph because he was the most generous man in the world, really, and it certainly came hard to him, though he didn't work for it manually--and that's how my grandfather did, of course, to create that nest egg, as it were.

Riess: What was the Sacramento house like?

Davies: Sacramento, like Oakland or San Francisco, had a part where the houses were great Victorian mansions, and that's where we lived. I think my mother must have taken in roomers; I can't remember that, except that my sister Erma--Marion died there, in fact--got scarlet fever, and we all had to stay in the house. They had a big quarantine notice on the door. We were locked up in that house. But I remember, because this was the hot summer, that my mother let us out in the side garden to play. We used to turn on the hose and play under the hose all day.

Now that house has been taken over by the government. It was in the area where Hiram Johnson, the governor, lived, and his father before him. I showed the girls the house when they were little. We were on our way to Tahoe and I said, "Let's go and find that house." This was before it was torn down for government buildings. It was at about Eighth and I Streets. It looked terrible, and they said, "Don't tell anybody that you lived there." It was a slum.

Riess: Then you went to school in Sacramento?

Davies: Yes, the third grade, I remember that very well. That didn't last very long, because after Marion died then my mother got this gold fever, and we moved to Seattle, and she bought about five acres on Bellevue Island. Now it's a very swell place. I went there about ten or twelve years ago with the garden club. Beautiful places, right on the water, and that's where we used to swim in our bloomers. We didn't have bathing suits; bathing suits were unheard of in those days. At least we didn't have any--maybe they were heard of. [laughs] That's where I learned to swim.

Riess: Was your mother a very proper person?

Davies: Proper? Well, she was unusual. The Art Commission asked me to tell my life story in three hundred words. The girl wrote back, or phoned me, and said about my story, "It's a lot more than three hundred." I said, "I know it, but cut out anything you want."

What I put in--and I bet they cut it out--was that we lived in Seattle for a while, that my mother milked cows and we delivered milk and chickens to the neighborhood. I thought that was interesting--but of course there is so much more than that that is interesting. It was because of you that I thought about that. Those were just a couple or three years that I don't think of very often.

Riess: Well, proper--she could have let you go swimming in the nude. A free thinker.

Davies: [laughs] No, no, that was not heard of. She was not that far out; no, she was very close to home. She didn't belong to anything except the Baptist church, which I think my stepfather belonged to.

Healings and Helping

Davies: My memories of Quincy are from before I was six, and then we lived in Sacramento, in Seattle and in Oakland, except that I went back every year, and then I spent the year there when I was twelve because of this diphtheria thing that nearly killed me--so they say.

Riess: Do you remember being sick?

Davies: I don't remember being that sick, but I remember hearing the doctor giving my mother Holy Ned saying, "This child should have had some attention before this." I think I was going blue at that point.

Before I had diphtheria she went into Christian Science. I didn't know much about it, except she would telephone these absent doctors and they were supposed to give you something over the phone.

Right now, of course, medicine is changing. And you know about Norman Cousins, I follow him quite a lot. I feel as if I know him, I have written him letters. He was first a World Federalist, and that's still interesting. Then he got this book he's written. He's not calling it Christian Science, but he's saying that by our minds we can really do so very much. This is going into all medicine now. You know the story, that he got this fatal thing and they told him that he had two months to live, and he said, "I'm not going to die, I don't want to die."

It works. I've done it myself when I wanted to go someplace and I was coming down with a terrible cold and I didn't want that cold. I guess maybe I had it from my mother because she said, "Growing up, I was never sick, I haven't got time." What it is for me: I go out and breathe deeply and I say, "I'm not going to have a cold." Your mind really controls your body. Of course there are such things as germs. You can do a lot with your mind to get rid of them, but you can't really do the whole works. But that's like Christian Science, mind over matter. For Cousins it is mind, and it's over matter, but not in the same sense as Mary Baker Eddy.

Riess: In the Catholic church there are healings too.

Davies: Yes, all these people came Sunday from the Knights of Malta. They had just been to Lourdes. They say they are not really cures. Say they have a cancer or I don't know what. It's very unusual that they are absolute cures. But what it does is give them hope, and they live with this hope, and they are able to overcome some of the depression. It makes them feel better, it gives them hope.

But I can see the doctor now giving her the dickens. Seems to me with the diphtheria they're supposed to turn some funny color when they are just about gone. My mother believed in God. And the belief in God--and even Catholics are doing this more I think--didn't mean that one church is right, but that they just believed there was somebody higher than themselves, some Supreme Being. I think that's what all hope is, isn't it?

Riess: Was she ever depressed and down, all those years on her own?

Davies: Well, she must have been, but I didn't know it. No, never. This came from that background on the ranch, I think. She was the kind of woman who helped people. She didn't do it because it made her happy; she just thought it was necessary. It wasn't something unusual. I can see her now. If somebody was going to have a baby, or they were sick, and somebody was away, she'd say, "I'm leaving," and she'd hitch up the horse and away she'd go. She did this all her life.

She used to go out to the poorhouse and she'd bring the shirts back for the men and the collars would be worn out and so she'd turn them around. She would hem up dresses. She loved to sew. She took lessons in Marysville. I think she was happier sewing than anything else. It was a pleasure for her to do it. What she did, that I never heard of anybody else doing, is to go out there at least one day a week and work with these people. And it wasn't a big deal or something that was unusual; she just, I guess, heard about it at the

church, and she was just naturally doing it. She didn't go with a whole crowd of people like they do now, like the Soroptomists.

Riess: Did she take you along?

Davies: No, I was working. Remember, I went to work when I was eighteen. And then we had that child. But it's maybe that that's in me.

Other Family Members

Riess: What do you mean you had that child?

Davies: I don't know how my mother got the child. It must have been from the church. It was two years old, and it had rickets. Terrible. It was all over it. My mother nursed it back to health. She loved children. (I love children. I have a whole lot of dolls all over the place and toys. And all the children come play with them. I must have gotten it from her.) The mother and father had separated and that's why she had the baby, because there was no place in that day to take the child.

We had the baby for two years, and when it was about four they came back and took it away. I can remember her going in--she wouldn't do it openly--but she sobbed because she loved that baby. "Oh, well," she said, "I knew it wasn't mine. But I'm going to miss it." See what I mean, she was a kind of natural mother.

She was always home, except when she went off to the church or something.

Riess: Who was in the house when your mother had the baby?

Davies: Probably only me. Maybe Irene. I'm the middle one. Marion, Erma, me, Raymond, and Irene. Oh, they must have been there too. I just remember it. I was working.

Riess: What happened to your brother Raymond?

Davies: He went to the University of Santa Clara, but he never graduated. When I married, and Ralph was in Standard Oil, he gave Raymond work on a tanker. They used to take gas to China and he was gone for a long time, half a year, on the tanker. I think he was an oiler in the engine room. They let them off in Hong Kong and some place else

over there, and he came back, he'd spent all his wages. He brought my mother, who loved dogs, the cutest puppy I'd ever seen in my life, a Llaso Apso. We had it for years and years and years. My mother-- that's why I have a bird and dogs, I guess, because we always did.

Then we built the house in Oakland and Raymond was the contractor. He didn't know anything more about building a house than I do, but you let out contracts, you know. I don't know what Raymond did when we went to England. I guess he was a contractor then. Then when we returned he got a job through Ralph and he had an oil station. First he was in Oregon and he was a distributor for Standard Oil. Later on he had his own station in Stockton. Then he went to work for Standard Oil.

This happens, I guess, when somebody has a job: they bring in all their family. Ralph brought in his brother Harold too.

Riess: What happened to Erma?

Davies: Erma worked, and then she got married. She married Jimmy Blum. My nephew is Jimmy Diamond--he changed his name because he said when he went into the orchestra business they didn't think Blum was a very good name for an orchestra leader.

Riess: You sound like the rock of your family.

Davies: I'm the only one left, that's for sure. Actually they asked me to do this history because of Ralph, but since I am paying for it, I guess I can talk about myself. Is that all right? [laughs]

Riess: Yes, indeed. What was your address in Oakland?

Davies: First of all, a long, long time ago, it was Eighth and Brush. We went to the Lafayette School. That's where I graduated from the eighth grade. Then my mother married Mr. Houck, and we lived out on Park Boulevard. They built whole blocks of houses, and we lived in about six, as I remember, until the last few years, and then we lived in one.

My mother put him in business. He was awfully nice, really, and he made her very happy, and very content--well, not content, but they seemed to be very happy.

Riess: How did they meet?

Davies: I think through the church. As I said, my mother believed in going to church, and I don't care what church it was. I know they went to church. I remember once when we used to belong to some church we went to Epworth League and something else about three times on Sunday.

Riess: I think that's Methodist.

Davies: Is that what it is? I think I've been to every church in the country.

Riess: Was he her age?

Davies: Probably a little bit younger. He lived a little bit longer. Thinking about that marriage, it was a very good thing for her. A woman of that age—I thought she was very old, forty-five. Of course the older I get the less the age really matters. My mother was a strong woman. She knew her own mind and she did what she wanted to do. It didn't matter to her about anybody else. She didn't talk very much, but she did what she wanted to do, regardless. She liked to play the piano and sing, but she was not a talkative person. It gives me great pleasure to talk about my mother, because without even thinking about it, she was a good mother. You know what I mean?

Riess: And not everyone is.

Davies: No. Maybe they don't have the training, maybe they don't have it in the genes.

You know, I had a great big birthday party the other day. This girl over here, thirty-seven, gave me the biggest party you can imagine. She had balloons all up and down the avenue. She had Louis Magor come and play. She had the biggest caterer. She got Jan Yanohiro, and they sat her next to me, because I've been on that television program. Well, she has a one-year-old and she said, "I'm going to wait one more year and have another baby. It isn't right to have this child alone." She said, "I didn't realize it was going to change my life to have a child. It's been a very good thing for me." She's thirty-eight.

Riess: How did you know her?

Davies: Through Ziggy Stone, KPIX did something at the firehouse. We went to the firehouse, and they had the big fire engine, and I think the chief came out too.* This was the first time I was on KPIX, about five or six years ago. Then I got acquainted with all these people. We were having such a good time that someone went out and bought a pizza or something and Ziggy played the piano and somebody bought some wine, and so we stayed there, quite a number of people from the station. That's where I met Jan.

Then she did a feature on the Symphony. I think in all I've been on three times on that "Evening Magazine". They do five-minute things. That's how I met Ziggy Stone, and now he's with KRON, and now I'm on that "San Francisco Minute".

Jobs, and Father

Riess: Did you have secretarial training at the convent school?

Davies: I took it there. It was high school and secretarial.

Riess: No thoughts about going to college?

Davies: No. I was going to earn my own living. I had to earn my own living, and that I did.

Riess: Did you turn over some of your earnings to your mother for room and board?

Davies: Yes, but very little of it. When we were children we got an allowance or something, and she always made us go and put it in the bank. We all had savings accounts. I think I got thirty dollars a month when I first went to work, and she'd say, "Now, you at least put three dollars of that away. Every month." And I did. She thought it was good for me to realize the value of money.

* The firehouse, formerly Engine Co. 31, is on Green Street in the Russian Hill section of San Francisco. Rescuing and restoring this architectural memento of early San Francisco, which will one day come under the National Trust for Historical Preservation, was a project begun in 1956 with a gift of \$50,000 to Mrs. Davies by her husband on their 30th wedding anniversary. See Appendix A

Riess: How did you get your first job?

Davies: Through ads, or an agency, I guess. I really had the gall of I don't know what to hire myself out as a stenographer when I couldn't do it, really. But I met the nicest people. Oh, a couple of them fired me immediately, I must say that. They said, "Well, you're not really qualified for the job." I said, "Oh? All right, I'll leave."

The first job was with a man who was so patient with me. I was sixteen and I said, "You know, really, I haven't completed the course, but I just thought I'd get a job anyway." He paid me \$30 a month. His name was Mazor. It was a clothing store, a pretty big store. I got to know all those Jewish people that summer. Mannheim and Mazor, that was the big clothing store. I only worked for him for about three months, but I remember him because he was nice to me. You know what I mean? He was patient.

One of the most interesting jobs was that I worked for the secretary of the secretary of the mayor of Oakland. The present mayor of Oakland, Lionel Wilson, at that event the other day that the APL gave for the launching of the Monroe, he had really looked me up, and I was amazed at how he knew about that job. He said that Mayor [John L.] Davie--that was the name of that mayor I worked for--made an impression on the city because he built tennis courts right there in the middle of Oakland. They still use them.

The mayor's secretary--I immediately fell in love with him. He was a very handsome man. And when Earl Warren was the city attorney for Oakland, I christened the brand new fire engine that the city had bought which I think is kind of ironical. They asked me to break champagne on it. Little did I know then that I was going to have a firehouse of my own! Later, when we had the American President Lines, Earl Warren was on the supreme court of the United States and he and his family took a trip with us on one of those liners. Life does sometimes interlock!

Well, there was that job. Then I left City Hall, because I wanted to be a movie actress. [laughs] I remember that secretary I was working for even called up Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and I had all kinds of introductions down there. They gave me letters to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and to, oh, maybe half a dozen of them. I'll never forget it. My father took me down. But as you see, I didn't get in. The reason was that the one fellow, he chased me all over the room! And I was pretty young!

Riess: You went down for an audition? Well, that's what they say, that you have to sleep with the producer!

Davies: Well, he scared me to death, and I didn't go anyplace else! I had all these letters of introduction, but I didn't go anyplace after that. I can remember running around the room, and I had just met him.

Riess: Those stories are true?

Davies: Oh, yes, you don't get anywhere without being a bedfellow, I'm sure. That was the way it was then. My father, he didn't know anything about cars, he really didn't know how to drive, and oh, what a trip! He was taking me down under duress, you might say. I wanted to go down and visit, after that one thing I never went back. Then we went to Yosemite from Los Angeles and in those days as you entered Yosemite it had a 45-degree road. And the brakes went out! Oh, we had a terrible time. [laughs] Awful!

That was the summer. Then I left the City Hall, and I went to work for IXL Jam, and I stayed there two years. The last job I had was when I went to Los Angeles and worked for the costume company. I thought I wanted to go down again and I would make some inroads on the movie business, but by then I had met Ralph and I came back here and I took a job in San Francisco just so I could cross the bay and be with him!

Riess: Nice that your father took you on that trip. He thought you had talent?

Davies: I don't think he thought a thing about it. He just said, "Oh my, girl, if you want to go, let's go." So we did. Hmm. I hadn't thought of that for a long time.

Riess: Where was your father living?

Davies: He had left Quincy and bought a place in Dixon, a vineyard. He had quite a large vineyard, quite large. We used to go up there and see him sometimes.

Riess: Were you his favorite?

Davies: No, I don't think so. But he really did love children, he loved his children.

Riess: Did your daughters know him?

Davies: No. I have a film in here that was put together by my sister's husband, Jimmy's father. He went up to Dixon and took some pictures of my father, movies. I had them all put together when it was my

Top Left: The Stivers children: Six-year-old Louise holding Baby Irene, and Raymond, and and behind them Erma and Marion. Quincy, Plumas County, 1906.

Top Right: Katherine Chandler Stivers with her daughters Erma (top), Louise May and Irene (bottom, left to right).

Bottom Left: Ralph K. Davies in a photograph by the Davies' friend Barbara Sutro, 1938. "Louise bullied him into having his picture taken...I was thrilled with the results."

Bottom Right: The newlywed Ralph and Louise Davies at Brockway, Lake Tahoe, August 1925, "one of Ralph's rare vacations."



sister's birthday, oh, about five years ago now, and I was so surprised that there was one of my father in it. He was a very good-looking man. I had forgotten that. And I had one of my grandfather. They had pushed them all together into one big film. Probably took about two hours that nobody will ever want to see again!

One day I'll have to get Jimmy to come over, and Katie Grubb and the girls from that family. You see, my husband was not very congenial with my family, so they never met much. He must have inherited that. Ralph's mother used to say her own husband couldn't stand her side of the family, so Ralph took this idea up, that he couldn't stand mine, more or less.

Riess: What about Christmases and Thanksgivings?

Davies: I never invited them. They came at other times. I would go to them. But this is something he inherited from his father and mother. And Maryon, too, has a hard time taking in the family, my family. But Alice is the one who encourages me to tell all about it!

Meeting Ralph Davies

Riess: How did you meet Ralph?

Davies: I met him at Pop McCray's. We went up on the train, my sister Irene and two other girls.

Riess: And where is that?

Davies: It's in Cloverdale. It's an old family resort. We always went there because it was close, and we could go. It was one of those places that families go to year after year on the Fourth of July. They just all would go up there. It's like we go to Tahoe every year. A lot of families go to some resort every year, and they probably got it from their mother and father. We just did it at the last minute. Somebody called up and, "Yes, they could take us." We were in little houses, on a river or something.

Ralph and a friend were driving north and they just happened to stop. They had the little cottage next to us, Ralph and this other, Mr. Pulliam, as I remember. They were driving the Standard Oil car, which they never should have been doing. They used to do that a lot though, you know, take the car out when they really shouldn't.

Riess: Describe yourself in those days. What did you look like in your twenties?

Davies: Hmm. Well, I had lots of curly hair, and it was very black.

I spent a year in Los Angeles. I got a job at Western Costume Company, and that's where I met many movie stars. I don't remember how I got the job, but I did. I had a cousin down there, and it was because of all this that I decided on Ralph, in a way. This cousin belonged to a sorority--a kind of second cousin on my mother's side, and I seem to have many relations rather distantly connected--and I stayed with them. I started out taking an apartment. That didn't work very well, so my cousin said, "Look there's a room in the sorority, so why don't you come there and stay." I said, "I don't belong." She said, "That's all right."

Ralph had a job reorganizing offices, and he was reorganizing some Standard Oil office in Los Angeles. Small things sort of turn your mind. When you lived in a sorority, if a man came to take you out all the women would say, "Wait, I want to go down and take a look at him." They make an excuse to say "Hello" or something. When this girl came back up she said, "Oh, he's so good-looking! If I had him for a beau I'd make for him. He looks nice!" Well, after that I looked at him quite differently. [laughs] Mind you, I liked him, but it had never occurred to me he might be a future husband, although I was looking desperately for one, inside, you know. It was those girls who made me look at him again.

Then I said, "Well, I guess he is nice looking." But it came to me as a surprise when all those girls said, "Gee, if I had a good looking fellow like that, I'd set my cap for him." That's what girls did those days. When I came home, I had a big decision to make. Was I going to stay in Los Angeles, and take up this big date that I had for New Year's, or was I coming home? He said, "If you stay here, my job is over and I won't see you again." I think it was those girls that influenced me. By that time I'd really begun to like him, and I said, "I think I'll go home."

Riess: And what did Ralph look like?

Davies: Oh, he was a very good-looking man. But I just didn't think much about him, until that time. He was certainly different than anybody else. He gave me books, instead of candy or something. In those days men always brought you a flower, a gardenia, or candy. But he always brought me books. Men don't do that anymore, do they? My girls have never gotten a present of flowers or candy from a beau.

I never will forget it, because he brought me Anatole France's Joan of Arc. I had never read it. He was a great reader. He never went to college either, you know, but he read a great deal. Different things than I read. He was kind of hipped at the moment on Anatole France. I still have the book, a beautiful book, nice leather. But it was such a different thing to do. I thought, "Well, this is funny!" I couldn't figure out why I got a book.

Riess: Did you talk about books together?

Davies: Yes. And he did read a lot. I think probably I read more, in a different way.

Riess: Do you think that meeting Ralph was fated?

Davies: Oh, you do at the time. Not really fate, but I do spend time thinking why do I do this, or why do I do that. Like why I want to give. I didn't even think about it. It was just in me. I knew I was going to give. Then how do you come to that? As Sister [Catherine Julie] Cunningham would say, if you asked her why she became a nun, "My life was centered."* She had no alternatives. There was nothing else for her to do. She knew, all her life.

Drawn Together

Davies: When I met Ralph I thought he was very different from anybody I had ever met before--or since, I should say! I don't know. He is a very different person. There aren't many Ralphs in the world. I met him when he was twenty-seven. There again, there are so few people that seem to know where they're going, but he did. Although he didn't exactly say it, you felt it, you knew.

* Catherine Julie Cunningham, A Native Daughter's Leadership in Education: College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California, 1956-1980, an oral history conducted 1982, Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

Riess: Did you find yourself deferring to him?

Davies: Well, I will say--. Every woman dreams of a wedding, don't they? At least I did. But he didn't want a wedding. I understood this afterwards. So instead we went to Sonoma and we were married by the priest in Sonoma at the Sonoma Mission Inn [August 29, 1925]. Then the next day we left for Tahoe, for Brockway. In August. Hardly anyone was there. And then we got a lot of telegrams!

Riess: Why didn't he want a big wedding?

Davies: Well, I can understand now, but I didn't quite then.

First of all, his father was back in Washington, and he had a brother who was very unstable, died of drink as well as cancer. He had a sister also who was not very stable, Natalie. And his mother, whom he lived with. This was a very hard thing for him to tell her, I remember. I understood afterwards that it couldn't have been otherwise.

Riess: Then there was another brother, Harold.

Davies: Yes, and Harold was Ralph's friend.

Riess: It seems to me that the histories and dramas of your family and Ralph's were not that different.

Davies: Yes, in a way. Wonder what draws people together? I've thought about that, myself. I didn't have many beaux at all. Oh, I did have a few, but this one I really liked very much--after I found out I did like him. First I wasn't quite so sure. But what makes one think, "Oh, yes, I like him." It usually is, as far as I can see, more or less, in my instance anyway, my decision. I knew that he liked me, and I think he felt that he'd like to get married--he was twenty-eight. I wonder what makes you decide that's the one person you're going to marry. Kind of interesting, isn't it?

Riess: I think you can answer that.

Davies: Maybe in a way it was our background, both parents divorced, both families carried on by our mother. There is some similarity, isn't there? Mother Davies certainly wasn't anything like my mother, but she was a strong woman in her way. Maybe that was it, that we had some similarities. And I guess we were both--I didn't think of myself as ambitious, but when I look back on it now I was ambitious. I mean, I wanted a family. Is that ambitious?

Riess: You wanted more than that, I think.

Davies: I wanted something more, yes.

Riess: You had a lot of confidence in yourself.

Davies: Actually, at one time in my life I thought I could do anything in this God's green earth. But I think that everyone feels that way, don't they? I thought everybody grew up thinking they could just do anything in this world that they wanted to.

Riess: At the time you are talking about, to be a movie star, for a girl, was maybe the height of ambition. And for a man, it would have been to be the president of the company.

Davies: Yes, that's what he worked for. I see, you're drawing us together in our ambition. That's probably it. I never thought of that before.

Riess: And were you very innocent when you got married?

Davies: Not quite. Oh, I'd had a couple of things. One of them, it's a long story. Not like these boys and girls now do. They think nothing of living together. I don't know that I'd do it, but I can't speak because we didn't do it in those days. In my period nearly all the girls that got married were practically virgins.

Way back in the forties there was a man, and I can't remember the man's name, he came out and said that it would be better, it would stop so much anguish, if people had trial marriages.

Riess: What would you do on dates? Dancing?

Davies: Either you made a lot of cookies before they came, or cake, and then you'd have ice cream, or coffee and cake, or you'd go out and make some candy or something. This is an awful long time ago. This is before the television, or anything. I can remember clearing the floor, and we'd put on a lot of records and dance to the Victrola and then after awhile go out and pull candy, or have sandwiches and coffee. We never drank. Isn't that funny.

Riess: You didn't go to roadhouses, that sort of thing?

Davies: Once. I did. I'll never forget that fellow. He took me out to a roadhouse when I was about nineteen. That's another long story. I can't remember the name, but he became very well-known. It doesn't matter now. I think he went to Berkeley. There were roadhouses, but I only remember that one, out beyond Hayward. That was Prohibition

time, 1919. I remember I drank too much, because I really couldn't drink. I guess it goes through the family. My sister was there, my older sister, Erma, and she didn't take me home, but she said, "You better go home right now." I guess I wasn't acting very well, or something. So I went home.

Riess: Ralph was different from the other men you knew?

Davies: Very different. He was a very different person to begin with. Everybody's different, but he was a little bit more different, I think.

You know, some judge gave me an awfully nice compliment--I never told Ralph. He was a superior court judge, and I think he had a lot to do with him when Ralph was at Standard Oil. He said, "You know, you really aided Ralph a lot. He was just a clerk in Standard Oil--earning \$3.50 an hour--and then you married him. You were a background for him. He felt then that he had something to go on." In other words, I was a family for him, that I made him feel he was a citizen. He said, "Without you he might have made it, but you provided the background."

Riess: Ralph was earning \$3.50 an hour?

Davies: Yes, but he never told me, and I went out and bought all those things and the checks bounced and he had to tell me. I thought he made a lot more.

Riess: Did you keep working when you got married?

Davies: Oh, no. Nobody ever did in those days, at least I didn't.

Riess: Did you have a hope chest?

Davies: I certainly did. I had one since I was about eighteen.

Riess: Did you have your silver?

Davies: No, I didn't have silver. I think my sister Irene gave me my silver, as a matter of fact. All wore out a long time ago. And now you can't re-silver things. You might as well go buy another set. It's been cleaned so much that they said, "No silver left." [laughs]

Riess: Did your older sister get married before you did?

Davies: Yes, way before I did, and I'm sure now she gave us our silver because her husband--his name was Blum--was fairly well off.

Riess: Did you and Ralph discuss religion when you were courting? You knew that religion was important to you. Was it important for Ralph?

Davies: No. You see, his father was a Theosophist. Annie Besant. Entirely different. Theosophists believe that you learn something here and then die and then you become something else. Reincarnation. So he never went to church.

And Mother Davies said her rosary. She didn't say it every day, but I guess there are a lot of Irish Catholics like she was. "I'm a Catholic," but she didn't go. He was baptized and had his first communion, and he went when he was a little boy to get instruction. They always went at Christmas or Easter or something, deaths and weddings. But as for the idea of going every Sunday, no. She couldn't drive, so maybe that was it. No, she just wasn't that way.

Riess: There wasn't a conflict in religion between the two of you?

Davies: No. He didn't really know anything about religion. He never went to a Catholic school, or anything. He really didn't know much about it. But he used to say that every night he said ten Hail Marys, mostly for the children.

Riess: Why would he do that "for the children?"

Davies: He did it by himself. Once in a while when I would be saying a prayer or going to mass, he'd say, "You know, I pray, too." I said, "I'm glad." He said, "I pray for the girls." I think everybody is a little religious, whether they know it or not. They pray to something.

Riess: Were you going to mass every Sunday from the beginning?

Davies: Yes, ever since I began it, since I was eighteen. It's been the basis of my life. And I guess it is with most people that have a definite religion. Sometimes a religion isn't religion. I would say that work would be my husband's religion; he was devoted to work.

Riess: Are there any times that you have felt some prejudice because you were Catholic?

Davies: No, I have never felt it. I think that Kennedy kind of lifted the head of every Catholic in the United States. He was the first Catholic president, and I think after that people realized that it wasn't just the servant classes that were Catholic.

II DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL

Davies: The other day--well, let me start by saying I'm going to see the Queen twice on March 3rd--the story of Dick Whittington and the cat came to me. I told someone about that and I said, "It must be a legend." They said, "It's not a legend at all. He actually worked his way to London and became Lord Mayor of London." Actual historical fact.

Riess: The Queen is coming to Davies Hall?

Davies: Yes. The English Speaking Union called me up about two weeks ago, and the president said, "Look, the Queen is coming to the Hall and you must be there," and I said, "I certainly will." They are going to have a little concert. The Hall is going to be filled. Brayton Wilbur came to see me. He is the nicest man. He is the head of the Symphony Association, and he explained that he had helped get this event for the Queen. He said, "First of all, the City Hall is too hard to control." The secret service you know. "And the Opera House is full of the Ballet. All the sets are all over." So the Symphony Hall was left. And he said, "We were right in there pushing for the Symphony Hall."

I understand that Dianne [Mayor Dianne Feinstein] wants all the ethnic groups to be in the Hall. She wants the people of San Francisco to realize she is thinking of them, I guess.

Two hundred and eighty places and eighty of them are the Queen's entourage, so only two hundred people can be invited. Can you imagine the scramble? Brayton said he's not telling anybody who he's invited, because everybody will say, "Hmm, well." (Always interesting who gets the invitations.)

But we were talking about reading. And I was remembering Dick Whittington. Seems extraordinary in his day that he could work his way up and actually become the Lord Mayor.

[Speaking of imminent visit of the Queen of England to San Francisco] I'm going out on a boat to meet the Britannia with Lord Walter Landon. And then at 10:30 she comes to the Hall, and that night I'm going to a de Young Museum dinner, before the reception and concert afterwards. [laughter] Isn't that something, if I live through all that?

I bought one new dress, pretty stunning. I said to the saleswoman at I. Magnin's, "Are you going to sell it to anyone else?" She said, "No." It's black, which I don't wear often, and it has white organdy sleeves; that's all it is, just the straight organdy. But I have a beautiful lavalier, and I have an ermine cape. I really will look swell. [laughs] Along with two hundred other people. My big problem has been that I'm very black [tan], and we're all supposed to wear gloves, which I haven't worn for years. I got out my long white gloves, and they look a little dingy, so I went down to the cleaners' and they said, "Oh, we don't do it anymore." Gloves aren't worn so they don't know how to clean them now. Seems to me we used to rub the kid in some kind of meal that cleaned them.

Riess: Well, clean gloves or not, it all sounds like great fun. And aren't you very proud and happy to be in the Hall on these state occasions. The Hall that you really caused to be!

Davies: Mrs. Paul Wattis is a very generous woman and as open as a flower. I love to quote her: "Isn't it beautiful, and I gave it!"

Riess: Don't you feel that way about the Symphony Hall?

Davies: Why sure I do, but I wouldn't go around saying, "I gave it." I only gave the down payment.

They say, "You did it." Well, what I did was--in the beginning, as you know, they didn't know whether it would go or not. But I knew, when I found out I was going to have this money--we have more now than we did in the beginning when Ralph died, though now it's

gone way down and it's in kind of a crisis thing, though everything my husband did was always in a crisis, [laughs] I guess all businesses are--anyway when this came up I knew that I was going to give it.

Gwin Follis whom I've known forever, I don't know that he even came to me, but I talked to him one day and he said, "Well look, they tried to build this hall for twenty years." They knew it should be built, because we are a musical city and there was all the crowding with the Opera and the Symphony and the Ballet, and they put it up to the public. You don't remember this, I'm sure.

Riess: I know something of the history that has to do with Harold Zellerbach.*

Davies: He was the one that wanted it. He had it put on the ballot, and it went down to defeat. Then bless his heart, it was at least ten years afterwards that it came up again, and that's where I came into the picture. You see, it flopped before, and these young men--you ought to meet them--they said, "Well, we'll go for broke."

Riess: Who are the young men?

Davies: Phil Hudner and Don Crawford. Phil is a lawyer, and Don Crawford is Bank of California. We had a great interest in the Bank of California that we sold to the Rothschilds. We still have a great interest, the family. Phil and Don meet together, and they tell me when it's about time we meet. "We have things to discuss." We have the best time. We laugh more than we do anything else. Because they are very nice, interesting young men.

Riess: Who approached them about the Hall?

Davies: I don't think anybody did. It was Gwin Follis who told me about it, because he was the head of Standard then. He tells a story about how he hadn't any interest--well, he had an interest, but not a vital one--in the Opera, or the Symphony. He went because his wife

* Harold Lionel Zellerbach, Art, Business, and Public Life in San Francisco, an oral history conducted 1971-73, Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.



San Francisco Examiner Jefferson Awards, March 1979. For their work on the Performing Arts Center, Samuel Stewart and Louise Davies (left front) are honored. Behind them, left to right, Charlotte Mailliard, Reg Murphy (Examiner publisher), Janet Pomeroy, and Walter Newman.



Mrs. Davies, photographed by the interviewer in 1984.

took him. Then Robert Watt Miller, because of the Opera, he said, "Look here, we're in a jam, and I think you ought to come down and help us out." He did, and ever since then he has been president of the Opera, president of the Symphony. But, he said it was just because somebody said, "Hey, you do it."

Riess: And he was talking to you about a new symphony hall?

Davies: Yes. He said, "If you really want to get interested in something, this is what San Francisco needs." It was he that guided me to it. So when Sam Stewart invited me to lunch, I knew that I was going to do it.

Riess: How did Sam Stewart fit into that?

Davies: Sam Stewart didn't come into that until afterwards. But without Sam Stewart we wouldn't have a symphony hall. He raised \$40 million.

Riess: The other groups you're associated with, the Catholic Youth Organization, University of San Francisco, Stanford, Exploratorium, College of Notre Dame, the firehouse, the Phoenix Society--were you on the boards of all of them?

Davies: No, never, not on all the boards. The Century Club, I think I was on the board. And the Garden Club.

The Phoenix Society, that's just because of the firehouse. I have given the firehouse to the National Trust. Now I'm in kind of a dilemma. I really have valuable things in that place, so am I going to leave it as it is? Or what am I going to do. Of course the National Trust would like me to leave it as it is. And I just might, I don't know. It's really pretty interesting; it's like a museum now, and it was a big black ball, exactly, when I brought it. Nothing in it except the stairway.

Riess: And the Exploratorium? How are you involved with that?

Davies: Oh, well. I met Frank Oppenheimer. I don't go, but I do belong and I'm on the board, and so I do give them money. I think I gave them \$10,000 last year for that reason.

Did you ever see the film about his brother, J. Robert Oppenheimer? It's such a good film; you think you are there. Frank will have nothing to do with it; he says, "It's not true, and I wouldn't go see it."

Riess: Getting back to Phil Hudner and Don Crawford, how did they enter your life?

Davies: When Ralph knew he wasn't going to live, he called up Pillsbury, Madison, & Sutro Company, Mr. Marshall Madison who was the head of it. We knew him. I never will forget the way Ralph did it, because this is the thing I hear from all sides, from other people--I knew it of course. Anyway, he called him up, and it was a Sunday morning, and he said, "Look, I want your youngest and your smartest trust lawyer, and I want him to come today."

That's the way Ralph operated. This is the training of Standard Oil. You don't know about big companies, and maybe they've changed, but in that day when they did something they did it "right now." And you'd better do it.

I remember Phil came down, and this was maybe twelve or thirteen years ago now. He was the age of Ellen, and he said, "I have to tell you, I have been here before, to a debutante party." Anyway, he's been with me ever since, and he's now a personal friend of the whole family's.

Riess: It was not until that point that Ralph had begun to think about what to do with the money?

Davies: Yes. You see, I think it's very difficult for people, especially men--at least for Ralph, and I can only speak for him, but I kind of think it's hard for everybody, but mostly men--to realize they are going to die, and need to make arrangements.

It finally came to Ralph that he had to do this. And it could have been even better, but he did pretty well. He lived two months after he made the will. Naturally he had been thinking about it, but it's so hard to come down and do something definite. Hard to make a realization of that kind.

Ralph had an idea of what he wanted to do. Phil said, "There's no way to guide some people, because they know exactly what they want." Phil gave Ralph the legal side of what he wanted to do. These five grandchildren, he wanted to insure them but he didn't want to tie them up too much; you know a lot of people tie their wills up 'til youngsters are forty or something.

Ralph didn't know Don, but because Ralph really was very definitely associated with the Bank of California he was a natural one, because he's also in the trust department. So they became friends. Now every summer for a whole week they all come to Tahoe. It's just like a family. It's a very nice thing, very nice for me.

Riess: The connection was not between Gwin Follis and the lawyers?

Davies: No, Gwin just talked to me on the telephone. I knew Gwin quite well. We knew his mother very well. He's not the son of Kingsbury; he's the son of Mr. Follis who was Mrs. Kingsbury's first husband. Oh well. Standard Oil--it's a whole subject in itself.

III RALPH K. DAVIES

Early Influences

Davies: Ralph's mother, he would say, "made him." Since five years old she would say, "Now, Ralph, you have to make something of yourself." He used to sell newspapers, in Washington, D.C., at the age of five. Something like a Dickens story a little, isn't it?

She knew in some way that he was brighter? Maybe. Dependable? Whatever. I remember him saying that. At the age of ten they left D.C. and moved to Sanger, outside of Fresno. He was the head of the family, he really was. She had no business head at all. He found a place for them to live and all this. So at the age of ten he felt that he was the head of the family.

This family, Ralph's family, was so different from mine. Ralph's father was one of I think four brothers, that came from landed gentry in England. The first son in that situation always got the property, and the other sons got whatever was left. I have always heard he went to Magdalen College, Oxford. (They pronounce it maudlin.) He went there for a while. But someone went to look it up and they said he didn't graduate. He was a very literary man. He took what he had and went to South Africa and invested in a gold mine and promptly lost most of it. Then he went into--as I understand it--a chicken farm, and lost the rest of it. So when he came to Boston, where he met Mother Davies [Nellie Waldron], he really didn't have anything.

Mother Davies, she came from this family in Ballyhonis, which is one of the poorest counties in Ireland. Her mother had four or five children and died, and then the father married again--she was the first lot, I think--and took the family to Boston. She never said it, but I think she must have gone into what you call "service," become a maid someplace. She never told me how she met Percival. She must have been a beauty, because she was beautiful even as an old woman. No lines at all. And she was jolly. The father was actually the opposite. How they ever got along and had six children, I'll never know. They didn't do very well, I can tell you that. Ralph remembers that for months on end they never spoke.

The reason they moved to California is because Harold got tuberculosis. They always thought that consumption, or tuberculosis, was because of the climate, so that's why they moved to Sanger. I don't know how they could buy the five or ten acres, but they did, and Ralph helped his mother plant the vines for a vineyard. And he, Percival, used to move out in the summer and spend the summer with them.

Riess: But otherwise remained in Washington?

Davies: He had to, yes, because that was the only money they had, and most of it he sent to Nellie, who was out here with his children.

Then Ralph went to work for Standard Oil at fourteen, and finished high school at night school. He was an office boy. (I know a lot about this because of Uncle George [George Maile].) He was there four years, in Fresno. He was evidently very good, because he used to write the letters for the manager and he used to make decisions and all kinds of things. Kenneth R. Kingsbury was president, and he came to visit, and Ralph was the one who showed him around. They had an old Ford, a Tin Lizzie, that Ralph took him around in and he says he was scared to death! Actually I guess Kingsbury wasn't president at the time, but he was from the main office.

Anyway, Ralph used to write such wonderful reports and finally Mr. Maile, who was our "Uncle George" and a great influence in my life as well as all my children, he said that somebody down there in Fresno is writing all those reports and all those letters, and it isn't the manager, because he knew him. So he asked him to come in to San Francisco.

Ralph was nineteen when he left Fresno. He brought his mother with him. He said for the first year he froze to death because San Francisco was so cold--and Fresno had been so hot. Ralph went in as a clerk. Uncle George was the business manager there, and he kept saying that this young man had all these wonderful qualities, so that Ralph ended up, when I married him, as secretary to [H.D.] Collier, who was a director.

Riess: How did he go on to get the education he really needed?

Davies: He finished high school at night school. And then he read a lot, as I told you. It seems strange to me now, and I'm afraid as I think about it, that my grandson Ralph [Lewis] went to Cate School and did very well, but then he started in college and then he quit school. I kind of think that maybe he thought, "If Grandpa could do it, I can." It occurs to me now that's maybe why he didn't go on to college. These things are influences, aren't they? Too bad. Funny, it never occurred to me until this moment. He adored his grandfather.

Riess: Did your Ralph make an effort to study languages, or any other skills that he might have needed? Self-teaching.

Davies: No, he just read a lot. You see, he was very ambitious. That's not quite the word. But he wanted to get there!

Riess: Ambitious is too pejorative? That's why you don't like that word?

Davies: Sometimes I think the English language is not quite what I wish it were. They say other languages have more expressive words, more subtlety than English.

Riess: Was he a good mimic? Was he good at copying behavior?

Davies: I don't know. I don't know whether he did or not. I know I do. I'm a great mimic. I have to laugh at myself. I'm around somebody who stutters, and the next half hour I'm going to stutter, can't help it. Maybe that's where that acting thing comes in. People influence me. When I came home from England I was talking like the English. Didn't take me long to get over it, but I certainly talked like I lived in England all those years.

Riess: Who do you think he modeled himself on? Uncle George?

Davies: No. But Uncle George was a great influence because Ralph was away a lot and Uncle George lived right down here in Woodside, and we were part of his family. He told us stories, and whenever I got upset--and I did, because this was not easy--I had him to talk to.

I read the other day that everybody should have somebody to tell their troubles to, a confidante I guess. And few people have it. I didn't know I had it, but I did have one in Uncle George. I'd say, "Look, why is this happening?" He'd say, "Well, let's look at it this way." He'd give me a balance. That's maybe where grandparents used to come in, because they were around more. I didn't have any around.

Riess: The tricky thing is to have someone who doesn't make judgments.

Davies: Uncle George never made judgments. He taught me to see the other side of a thing. He was such a well-rounded man. There again, he didn't go to college. But before he left England he taught Spencerian. He also did a lot of acting. Years ago people did this; I think they still do, in small towns. In Ireland when I was there I couldn't get over it, families would entertain each other by putting on a play.

Personality and Ambition

Riess: Whenever you mention Standard Oil, you roll your eyes, like it's all too hopeless to explain. Yet you really will have to. All the interlocking connections. It is important, and interesting.

Davies: Well, yes, goodness knows. Did you read about this Japanese who spoke last night? I had tickets, and they called me up this morning and said, "You should have gone!" It was to give that Japanese [Ryoichi Sasakawa] the Linus Pauling Medal for humanitarianism. The master of ceremonies was Carl Sagan. They say it was fabulous.

Riess: You are thinking of parallels to the complexity of Ralph's life?

Davies: Yes, and I'm sure that other men who have achieved something have gone through more or less the same, in other ways. You don't reach the top by just reaching it. And believe me, he started from the bottom of the ladder.

This fellow, Sasakawa "is an 82 year-old billionaire who made his fortune from gambling, a philanthropist on a staggering scale who was once accused of war crimes. Now he devotes his efforts to spreading a deceptively simple message: 'The world is one family. All mankind are brothers and sisters.'" [San Francisco Chronicle, 2/25/83, p. 22]

Riess: So many of them end up with his philosophy of "love one another."

Davies: I don't know as Ralph was so "love one another." He was very, very kind in his way. I mean, I can tell you countless things. I think it was like Rockefeller: he was a pretty stingy old guy, and yet in the end he gave it all away.

I think this happens to people. It's not easy to go to the top, and you aren't all that charitable, I'm sure. You couldn't be, or you wouldn't get there. The Carnegies, they were all supposed to be tight flinty men. Ralph was not that kind. In fact he was the opposite. I don't think that he was very charitable in his mind to many people. You know that's a development. He was extremely, unusually generous, you know, or he could be. But for all those early years he couldn't be. He had many trials, I'm sure like every one of those people.

Did you read what it said at the bottom of that article? "At the beginning of his interview yesterday, Sasakawa handed out a card that he said explained his thinking. 'Comfort and encourage, without distinction, of friend or foe, the sick and suffering. Pray for the safety of men, animals, and birds,' it said, as if that explained everything." At the bottom it said, "Of course it didn't."

Like Rockefeller, all those fellows, they get very philanthropic. Ralph was not with a great big hand, but he was always generous. Too generous, I thought. But he wasn't when he was a young man. How could he be?

Riess: The story on Sasakawa seems to be that he is paying his debts, acquitting his conscience.

Davies: Oh, Ralph didn't go through anything like that. He had a very difficult time at the end at Standard Oil—and it was very unfair. They enacted what they called the Sherman Act, the government did. They [Standard Oil] owned everything, everything. Then they had to dissolve that empire. It really didn't happen. It happened in a degree, but still the Rockefellers controlled it. The Rockefellers would not say that, but they really did. It was not all dissolved. It's like a family; you really never get rid of your family, even though you might get mad at them or something.

Riess: How did Ralph get the appointment as deputy petroleum administrator in World War II?

Davies: This was because of Ickes. Ickes gave the whole thing to Ralph, because he knew nothing about oil. This was the greatest thing that ever happened to Ralph, although he had resigned from Standard Oil—which is a story. It couldn't have been a better thing, because then he threw himself into this new job, and as I said, he

was really prominent in that. He really ran the oil for the United States.

Riess: Was there a hearing at the time of his appointment?

Davies: I don't think there was time for it. Ickes was secretary of the interior and he just appointed him, I think. All I know is that he made a lot of enemies, because everybody wanted to get into the act. You know, it's a big job. It's like everybody wants to be President, though why, I don't know.

Riess: Did Ralph want to be President?

Davies: No. [laughs] Never occurred to me. But he was—as you see, like any man or any woman, it is a kind of a personal thing. Somewhere along the line he really wanted to be somebody. He really wanted to count. And he did. He had a tremendous ambition. If you worked for a company at the age of fourteen, and really worked for them, you can't help but want the next job ahead of you, and so forth, so part of it was a growing thing.

Riess: Most people don't dream of the top.

Davies: Oh, he had no limits. I think that's hard for some people to understand. Most people say, "Oh, I couldn't do that." Or, "That's fine for you."

Riess: Don't most people reach for what they can get? Ralph was aiming for more, almost.

Davies: When you think of it now, it would be almost impossible to do. He could do it at that time, but now it would be more difficult.

Riess: Were you his confidante in these wishes and in the troubles?

Davies: Not in a direct way, but indirectly. You know what I mean. He would come home with his frustrations, or the things that were going wrong, and although he didn't explain them, hardly ever, yet as a wife you probably get the drift after a while. It's amazing, because they bring home—husbands have always done this, I guess—the atmosphere that they had up there in the office, which was, as he said, "Always a crisis." I said, "Oh, your whole life in a crisis!" "Yes, it is. Something every day happens that you have to decide immediately about."

What he had was a determination. Maybe that's what makes people do things. It isn't because they are so much brighter than other people. All I know is, he was very determined. They say that if you really work at being strong and well, even if you're not,

you're bound to be. They say this of physical people. So, maybe ambition makes you work your brain or your willpower a little more than other people. If you really want to be somebody, you work at it harder. I think that is true of Ralph. God gave him a good brain, naturally, but I think if you really have ambition it helps you bring out that brain. Didn't I read someplace that we only really work ten percent of our minds?

I know physically it's true that if you say, "All right, I'm going to do something," you feel better. It's an effort to take a walk or to exercise. I'm sure it must be the same way with the brain.

Riess: Would you sit down and have a drink with him, and he would unload his troubles?

Davies: We would always have a drink together. But I can understand--he wanted to forget it for a little while. He took long walks every night. I guess our grandchildren remember that. Every single night, rain or shine. He was pretty active, but there he was at the office answering the phone and all that sort of thing. A pretty hectic life.

So he didn't talk about it, but from his atmosphere you knew, more or less, what had happened. It was unusual when he was very relaxed and something good had happened. Then he would talk. When it was not something he wanted to go on with, then he would shut up like a clam.

I think many people are that way.

Riess: Of all the people who wrote about him in the book, who was his closest friend?*

Davies: Chandler Ide. Chandler came to him very early and was with us all those years. Day and night. He really had a very hard role. But he was devoted to Ralph. He came as his secretary, and he ended up by just being everything. I could call him anytime too.

Riess: Was Ralph grooming any of those men to take over, at Standard Oil, or later at Natomas, or elsewhere? A protege?

* Ralph K. Davies: As We Knew Him, Biographical Recollections and Reflections of R. K. D. as Man and Businessman, Contributed by Associates, Friends and Family. Privately printed, San Francisco, California, December 1976.

Davies: Hmm, no, he wasn't really. Chandler couldn't do it, but he has been the one who has been part of the family in a way, until afterwards Dorman Commons came in. He's the new president of Natomas.

Mother Davies

Riess: I'd like to hear more about Ralph's mother and her influence.

Davies: She came from an entirely different background than I did, and I felt sorry for her. First we lived for a year in Ross, and then she lived with us for two years, 1927 and 1928, in Oakland, on Brookwood Road, and it was very difficult for both of us. We left in 1928 to go to England, and she stayed in the house that Ralph built over there, and she had her son Harold, the painter, and my brother Raymond, who built the house. They would come and keep her company.

She was darling, sweet, and awfully old, I thought. Seventy. So different than her husband. Her father, Waldron, when he came to Boston became a very successful contractor, and in New Jersey built half the public buildings. She didn't get married until she was twenty-four. She said when she got married she weighed 104 lbs. That's what I weighed! She loved to sit and tell stories. She'd tell you about her dreams. She always thought dreams meant something. She'd swirl the tea leaves around in the cup and she'd say, "This is what's going to happen." A very visity old lady. Didn't matter if the beds were made, didn't matter what, she'd say, "Well now, let's have a nice visit." We didn't have people like that in my family. It was first get the work done, and then sit down. I'm still like that. If I want to write a letter I have to go and do my other chores first. It's a habit. As William James said, "our whole life is a habit."

My daughter Maryon--Mother Davies had a little "delicate air" about her, a kind of fussy, charming way of doing things, and Maryon, strangely enough, if she allows herself to be herself, she has this too. This is something to do with genes. Maryon only knew her until she was about eight or nine; it wasn't something she copied. It was a little Irishness, and Maryon is quite Irish. She now belongs to the Irish-American Foundation.

Mother Davies counted everything on Ralph. She knew that he had something in him. She said he had to make something of himself. Anyway, so I would stay in bed, which was very difficult for me--and then when Maryon came I was busy--so that she could have Ralph alone in the morning. She would get up and get his



Ralph K. Davies parents, Percival Llewelyn and Nellie Waldron Davies

breakfast. She loved to cook. This was something that was very difficult for me to do. But I knew it was good for her, and it made her happy to do it.

Riess: And Ralph wanted it.

Davies: Oh yes, a little period without me. After all, they'd been living together until he was twenty-eight; he had always had her. I felt sorry, because I wasn't really a companion to her, at all! I could not enter her world.

When we came back from England we got her a housekeeper and she moved to Palo Alto, in her own house, and we moved to the Stanford campus, and it changed the whole thing. Years ago, always your relatives lived with you. They do in the old country still. But it was difficult, and I'm a pretty independent person.

Ralph was always very good to that family. Edward, who was the youngest, left home when he was thirteen. He evidently couldn't stand the family. This was in Sanger. First he got in trouble, and they put him in some kind of school, and then he ran away from that and came home, and then he did something else. Yet he was an awfully bright man. He had lots of brains but there's just something that makes people like Ralph do something with them. I don't know that Ralph was any brighter than a lot of people, but he had a direction and that's the difference.

Ralph and his brother Harold got along very, very well. Harold was older. There again, when Harold would come I would often just go to bed or read a book or something, because they were that close friends. Edward we only saw at intervals. Ralph was awfully good to him, bought him a ranch, bought him all kinds of things. Edward could be fabulously charming. This is the Irish for you. Ralph could be like that.

There was some woman from Washington who said, "I never give a party in Washington unless I have your husband, because he charms everybody!" Well, he wasn't that way all the time. But he could turn it on.

The first child in the Davies family was non compos and Mother Davies used to tell about that. They lived in Seattle at the time. She said the child cried all night. It only lived until it was six, and then the others came along. She said Percival, Ralph's father, would walk the floor with this baby all night long, because it would cry, cry, cry. It was born abnormal. Terrible.

Riess: Did Ralph support her?

Davies: Ralph's father got a salary from the War Department, \$400, and he gave \$200 or more to her. I'll look that up in their letters. He wrote to her quite often. Mind you, they didn't get along at all, but he wrote constantly to her. Then he came out and spent a certain time with them every summer, when they were growing up. They were both an influence on Ralph. People used to say of him that he had his father's front, but his mother's heart.

The Year in England, 1928-1929

Riess: Let's talk about that year in England.

Davies: Ralph was sent there by H. T. Harper, who was head of all the service departments. I will never forget, they called me up at the time and he said, "Now, look, you're representing the biggest oil company in the world. You're going to be asked to all kinds of formal parties." He said, "I think you should go and get some beautiful clothes."

He wanted to impress me that we were going to be in a very different group than we'd ever been in our lives. The Pratt family, which is really the Rockefeller family in New York--Florence Pratt married the head of Anglo-American Oil, Frank Powell. We were thrown into a group that was like going to the moon, for me.

Do you remember The Green Hat by Michael Arlen? It was about English society, and it was exactly the society we went into. I found out that two or three years later it happened in America. (This is something that's happening even now, I'm sure; the thing that's happening in Europe finally reaches America. They used to set the mores, and we'd get it three years later.) I remember reading The Green Hat and throwing the book clear across the room. I said, "Is that it!" This was so different than anything I had thought of, but it was actually happening when I was in England.

We had to get ready to go to England. We were making about \$350 a month, which was pretty good, but we had to borrow an awful lot of money to get ready to go. They paid our fare, of course, and we went to the best hotels and they paid that. But Ralph would have to send \$100 home every month to take care of Mother Davies.

The money we borrowed, five or ten thousand! Ralph really believed he was going to make it, even though he was just a clerk, really. When we were in Paris we stayed at the best hotel, still a good one. Wildly expensive. He said, "Well, we haven't any more money. I'd better telegraph for some more." So he wired Johnnie

Black to go out and get a loan for five or six thousand. He was going to stay at the best hotel, and have the best things, though we couldn't afford it. It's kind of interesting.

I said, "Why are we doing all this?" He didn't even answer me. He didn't explain it. "That's the way it is," he said, or something.

Riess: This was in the Depression?

Davies: Yes, 1929. That was the beginning of the dole, in England. That's what I remember. I used to go to the park quite often, because we lived at one time at St. James' Park, and I can remember people lying all over the lawns. It was summertime. I remember a man turning to me and saying, "This is the beginning of the downfall of the British Empire. We're giving something for nothing."

Riess: But it was "go for broke" on that trip?

Davies: It certainly was. We went to Rome, and had an audience with the Pope. We did it all. [laughter] A holiday.

Riess: Doesn't sound like Ralph.

Davies: I guess he thought we'd better go. We were only gone about two weeks, and then returned to England. We went to Paris and we went to Rome.

Riess: What was this English society like?

Davies: Well, I had no conversation whatsoever. I lost a baby, which was very unhappy because I wanted this baby badly. (I was three months pregnant when I left for England.) The doctor told Ralph, "Get this girl out of the city. This is too much for her." So we moved to Croyden, to an old manor house, Sandersted. There I spent the rest of our time mostly. Then when the Dorchester was built, the first year it was built, we went back and stayed there for about six months before we came on home.

We moved to the country because he was gone most of the time. Then I had this wonderful friend, Marguerite Hewitt, now Wildman, who is still my wonderful friend. Her father was the treasurer of the Anglo-American Oil Company, and without her I would have been entirely lost. Mind you, she is very English, and we used to have all kinds of arguments. But it doesn't mean you're not friends. She saved my life. We are still close. She came over here about three years ago, and she writes at least once a month.

Riess: Why was Ralph away from London so much?

Davies: Oh, honey, that's why he was sent over. To reorganize. He had to go to the south of England, the north of England. Quite often overnight. They were always traveling. He was an efficiency expert, so to speak. But it always tickles me because these English people, half the time after he had made his analysis, they didn't want to move. They were not very ambitious. They liked what they were doing.

Riess: Did Ralph's direct manner work with the British?

Davies: Well, his ideas for change didn't. It would have in America. It would have at Standard Oil. He's a product of Standard Oil, the way they think, the way they act, the way they do everything. The reason he was so generous was that Standard Oil believed if you paid them well they'd do better and they'd stay with you and all that. At Anglo at the end they offered him the presidency of the company.

Where I really got to know these people was when we were entertained, like by the Powell family. That's what The Green Hat was about. The weekends, the big tennis parties, the big boating parties. Enormous parties, and they don't believe in introducing you. They say if you're invited then you are a friend. It was so different. In a way the English are really better at social things than we are. It was a nice idea, that if you were invited you were a friend. Must have been fifty people at these things on a weekend. They intermingle, play tennis, go boating on the Thames. It's all very casual, seemingly anyway. This was very difficult for me.

Then afterwards one of them would call me up and say--knowing Ralph was gone--why don't you come out to dinner with me, or to lunch. This I didn't understand, but in The Green Hat they did it all the time; they all went out with each other's husbands and wives. They do it now all over the place. Maybe not San Francisco, but they certainly do it in New York. Maybe here. How do I know? But I couldn't understand it then.

Riess: Like a game, playing the game.

Davies: Well, I didn't do it, naturally. I think I did once, because I was very lonely or upset or something. But it was done just that way, and people didn't seem to think too much about it. Everybody knew about it; it was not unusual. To me it was unusual to the nth degree.

One of the girls I met came from Scotland. A couple of these girls must have realized that I was really out of it. I hadn't any conversation, and they were all talking about going out with people, about their children, their nannies. The husband of one of them became a great friend of Ralph's, and then of me. They were artists, muralists, and one of them worked for the Anglo-American Oil Company. We became great friends, and they visited here and I visited them there. But some way or other they kind of understood my plight. I was so very sick after I lost the baby. They thought I had diphtheria, but it was just because I was completely lost in such a group. The more I realize about health, it does go inward on you, as Norman Cousins would say.

One thing, when I was in England, to while away the time I went to the British Museum. The Davies have a family crest, and I made a banner displaying it. It was blue background, and I think it had three of these chevrons. Well, Ralph used the chevron for an emblem. Now they don't say Standard Oil anymore, they call it Chevron. I think it's from that small little thing that I gave Ralph. Somebody wrote to me about it. They said, "You know, your husband started this." I well know. And now it's not Standard Oil, it's "Chevron."

Parting from Standard Oil, and the Washington Years

Riess: You stayed in California during the war?

Davies: Yes, he was there for three or four years, until 1945. We spent the holidays with him, and he came back here, but I never lived in Washington. Maryon did; she went to a boarding school there. That was Ralph's idea.

This time in England was crucial for Ralph, because afterwards then they invited him to come and be a director of Standard Oil, the youngest director they had ever had. Maryon was born in 1930, and he was made a director of Standard Oil in 1930. That changed his whole life.

Riess: In the book there are so many allusions to his not becoming president of Standard Oil.

Davies: He should have been. Mr. [H. D.] Collier, Ralph was his secretary. Collier was a self-made man. Nearly all Standard Oil people were self-made men, except Kingsbury I think came from some place like Ohio and he was put in as president. But most of them just came up, like the story of the man at the top of the telephone company, who came up from being a line man.

But it doesn't happen often in oil companies to reach the top--and I know a lot about oil companies, as you might guess, and the way they go. The presidents are usually put in by New York, by the heads of Standard Oil. That's true of all oil companies, Shell, all of them. They reach the top, and then the head office throws them back. This man who's a great friend of Ralph's in Shell reached vice-presidency, and when he was supposed to be president they rejected him. It almost killed him, just like it killed Ralph. But they put in their own man. They have ideas about this. It happened also in General Petroleum. Ralph took those men in, because he understood.

Riess: Ralph had no idea what he was up against?

Davies: Not until it happened, and these other people didn't either. DuPont is another one. All these companies. Ralph in fact worked with the business school at Stanford on a study where they went around to find out how companies, big companies, operated.* I don't know if they could really pinpoint it that much, but they could allude to it, that the head company, wherever it is, is really the last word of all of those companies, although because of the Sherman Act they are supposed to be diversified, or divided, but they are not. Take it from me. It's just like government, all these things. The whole world, as they said, is ruled by maybe a dozen people. It's true.

Riess: When one is passed over, is there anything that one can do?

Davies: All you can do is resign, like Ralph did. In Ralph's case, thank God, he got a much better job, which was the best thing. But it made him mad! It made him so infuriated that maybe that's why he did so well as the petroleum administrator. He was focused, and determined.

Riess: Did he go to New York?

* The study resulted in the publication by Stanford University of Top Management: Organization and Control, 1941.

Davies: Yes, he did, to one of the Rockefellers. Yes, he did go. You know, Ralph was not a timid man. If he wanted to do something, he would get right in and do it. Like me. I can be very bold if it is for some charity that I am interested in, or somebody I am interested in. But if it is for me, I couldn't. So, I think when his life was on the line he could do something that he couldn't have done otherwise, if you see what I mean.

Riess: He did approach the people in New York?

Davies: I think he did. But at that time he probably had decided to resign anyway.

Ickes was a very egotistical man himself, I must say. He had a young wife. Do you know about this? He was married to this very wealthy woman and had one son, named Harold, who was interested in the Indians in Arizona. Then she died, and when he was sixty-four he married this wife who was twenty-six, and she had I guess two children by him. The boy became almost a part of this family for a while.

Riess: How did Ickes and Ralph meet?

Davies: I don't know but they became very close friends. Ickes was not an oil man, knew nothing at all about oil, so it wasn't at petroleum things they met. But as he said, in his book, "I liked the set of his jaw," or "the cut of his jib," a simple thing like that. "And I wanted him with me, and he knew oil." So there we were. He took Ralph to meet Roosevelt, to get his approval.

I liked Roosevelt, and I loved to tell this story, which shows you what kind of man he was. We were in a receiving line to meet Roosevelt. Ralph had a secretary who was utterly devoted to Ralph. He inspired people, just as he was, to be utterly devoted to him. This woman, Jo, his secretary, never got married. I think she was in love with Ralph! [laughs] Anyway, this secretary in Washington, we were in a line, and she was a little ahead of me. Roosevelt was sitting in a chair, and this was at the time when the Philippines was taken by MacArthur.

I love this. She leaned over and she said, "Mr. President, this is the happiest moment of my life. I have watched you on television, listened to you on the radio. You are the greatest man in the world. This is the happiest moment of my life!" He was sitting, and he said, "Come here, I want to tell you a secret. Right now I am the happiest man in the world. Guess what, I've just heard that MacArthur has taken the Philippines. Isn't that wonderful!"

He didn't know any of us, and for him to do this! He wanted to make her feel good. I thought, that is a good man. I was next in line, and I said, "Hello," and went right on.

Riess: Did you know Eleanor?

Davies: Oh yes, she gave a tea for me, when I was in Washington. She had asked me several times to come to tea but I was not there. This time she knew that I was there, through all those secretaries. My great friend Hortense Fitzgerald was there too. This was the nice part: the secretary called and asked me if I had ever been to the White House, and I said, "No."

"So that you will find it easier, Mrs. Roosevelt has asked Senator Byrd's wife to meet you in the Oval Room and escort you up." When we got off the elevator, her room was way at the end of the hall, but she came all the way out to the elevator to meet me. Now, any other woman--I've had invitations, and you go to meet them! She came to meet me; I couldn't get over that.

It was a nice gossip tea party. She had maybe eight of us, senator's wives, and Frances Perkins, the secretary of labor, and it was just talk. Perkins said, "I went to the most awful dinner last night, terrible, all they talked about was how they hated the Roosevelts." Eleanor said, "Why did you go," and she said, "Well, I didn't have anything better to do." Then Eleanor said, "I went to a dinner last night, and I was so tired, and there were two men on each side of me, and I just leaned back and closed my eyes while they talked in front of me!" See what I mean? A most gracious lady.

Riess: Ickes called his autobiography The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon. He couldn't have been so easy to get along with.

Davies: He was very, very definite, and sharp in the office. But to meet him, he was like a lamb. He knew everything about gardens. When he first came here I was a little bit upset at the prospect of meeting him. I knew that Ralph spent every Sunday at his farm. They got along famously. But he couldn't have been sweeter or nicer or more gentle. It was the opposite to being a curmudgeon.

Riess: What were Ralph's politics?

Davies: I don't know.

Riess: Presumably you were Democrats?

Davies: I don't know. I'm now a registered Republican. I don't know why, exactly.

Riess: Did Ralph care how you voted?

Davies: Oh, we often voted opposite. I said, "I'll cancel you!" We didn't always see eye to eye. How we were registered never really mattered. I think he said that too. He'd vote for who he wanted to, regardless. I think I was more interested in politics than Ralph was. Ralph had a business, he had a job, and he really gave his all and all to it. Politics were very secondary.

Riess: Of course, in Standard Oil it would be important, or useful, to be on the right side.

Davies: But you know what, they give to both sides. That's what they always do. They have to.

IV COMMUNITY

The Children, and Family Traditions

Riess: To go back and pick up your life. After England, you came back to Oakland. Maryon was born in 1930, and Ellen in 1931.

Davies: And Alice was born in 1934.

Riess: Was Ralph with you when the girls were born?

Davies: [laughs] Oh, yes. He wanted a son--all men do, I guess, don't they?--and he never got a son. I know how badly he wanted a son, so I'll never forget him saying when I came out of the anesthesia, "We have a little girl, Alice." I never will forget, I want to cry now, because I knew. But he was so nice about it. Men always like sons, don't they?

Riess: I wonder what it would have been like to be his son.

Davies: I don't know. He spoiled Maryon to pieces. A lot of men do that. He gave her anything and everything that she wanted. You get into a thing like that and you kind of expect the world to go on like this. I wonder what he would have been like with a son. I think he wouldn't have spoiled him. But the daughter, Maryon, she was beautiful--she is a very beautiful girl--and she looked like his mother. I think he was awfully nice to have a third girl, and smile about it. [laughs] We named Alice for Alice Buck.

Riess: Were you kept very busy with the babies?

Davies: Well, we always had somebody in the kitchen. Ralph liked the idea of that.

Riess: Were the grandmothers around to help?

Davies: Ralph's mother lived with us those two years, in Oakland.

My mother--my mother was lovely. I think that all the kindness I have comes from my mother; she had a big soul, shall I say? It didn't bother her, and Ralph was nice to her, especially when she was unwell, but it was hard. Maybe it's the Irish, I don't know, they are kind of a clannish bunch, awfully good to their own. Ralph would never say anything against his brothers, who really had troubles. But it was hard for him to take in other people and feel that they were all right. So my mother--he was nice to her but it was not a close relationship at all.

Riess: Would you tell me about your family traditions? Christmas, Easter?

Davies: Well, years ago, for Thanksgiving we always went to Alice Buck. This was when our girls were little, four, five, six. It must have stopped when Frank Buck died. Then they came here after a while. This was a long time ago. We were their "family," you know. Then at Christmastime they would come here, Frank and Alice, and Olga, the sister.

Riess: What about Ralph's family, and your family?

Davies: Oh, he always had his mother. The mother lived with us for a while. But not my family. He didn't like my family. He didn't say he didn't want them, but he would make them uncomfortable when they did come, so they never came again.

Oh, you're talking about a long time ago. He was not a jolly fellow at any time. He could be witty, charming, wonderful, when he wanted to be, but if he wasn't, he wasn't, so my family didn't come after the first few years. My mother would say, "Look, we'll come when he isn't there." But this is something he inherited. This was his own father's attitude toward his mother's family.

Riess: Did you open presents Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day?

Davies: Christmas morning. We always had a big breakfast, and then we'd open them. The Bucks always came for Christmas breakfast, and I can remember we had a disaster one time when we had a woman here and we had scrambled eggs and she either got nervous or something and she dumped it all into Frank Buck's lap!

Riess: Was there anything about Christmas that was religious?

Davies: Oh, we all went to mass. Ralph never went to mass except on Christmas.

Riess: What did you do at Easter?

Davies: They used to have a wonderful Easter egg hunt that was put on by the volunteers at the Stanford Convalescent Home. It was on the hill over here, and all the kids would go out, and there was a big prize for the one who found the most eggs. We used to hide eggs all over here and invite the neighbors to come. We even did that when we lived in Oakland. Easter is such a pretty holiday.

Stanford and the Business School

Riess: Why did you and Ralph move to Stanford?

Davies: A lot of people in those days used to come from San Francisco--(I suppose they came from Oakland, though I never heard of anybody). Menlo and Woodside were supposed to be summer places. This was a long time ago. It still is only a summer place for some people. The Fleishhackers only come down here from June until September.

Riess: You had been living in Oakland.

Davies: Yes, we built a house in Oakland.

Riess: This was a tremendous commute for Ralph.

Davies: Well, he'd commuted from Oakland to San Francisco. So when we moved down here he commuted from here.

We liked it down here. We liked to take picnics. We were always going up to Clear Lake or some other place for picnics. We used to bring the two babies down here to Searsville Lake and picnic and get a boat and go around. Originally we only came for the summer, and then we decided to stay. We stayed on the campus. Alice was born there.

Riess: That was a very nice connection, to be on the campus.

Davies: It was for me. I'm more for that kind of group than I am for the people who play bridge all the time.

We could have bought the house on the campus, but Ralph decided he didn't want to. He was then connected with the business school. The Graham Stuarts, whose house we were in, she didn't like the campus life evidently. You see, they were very close, the professors were. They always had parties together and so forth.

Riess: You became part of that community?

Davies: A little bit. Quite a bit. I kind of like the academic life. Those people, they have as many intrigues as anybody else. [laughs] Maybe more. At least I heard a lot about them.

Riess: Had Ralph been approached by someone in the business school before you went down?

Davies: No.

We met all these people. The Graham Stuarts, very, very nice people, she invited everybody on the whole campus to come and meet us. This was to say, "They're going to live here, so you better know each other." Then we met [Hugh] Jackson, who was the head of the business school. I think that's how it started.

Riess: And Herbert Hoover. Was he down there then?

Davies: Yes. They built that house that's now the president's house. Where we lived on Gerona Road was right around from the president's house. After the children had their nap we would walk around that circle. (This is a very nice story about Mrs. Hoover. She was a lovely woman. He didn't have a very good reputation socially, but Mrs. Hoover did.) She would see us going around, and so one day she invited us in. She didn't know who we were at all, except that we took that walk almost every day. She gave the children milk and cookies, and that's how I got to know her.

Riess: Weren't they just recently returned from Washington? [Hoover was president 1929-1933.]

Davies: Yes, you're right. They lived there quite a few years. I can remember when he was elected. Living on campus I got to know the professors and their wives quite well. The professors used to tell me, "Oh, we have to go up there," [to visit Hoover] and I'd say, "Well, what's the matter?"

"Oh, he hasn't any small talk. He says, 'How are you? Sit down.'"

They loathed going to see him. He was admired, but not liked. But it was a kind of order. If you were invited, you had to go. And you couldn't drink. Well, it was his duty to have all those professors and their wives there periodically for dinner.

Riess: Was that an important introduction for Ralph?

Davies: No, that all came through Ickes.

Riess: I have here a copy of the book that Ralph did with the business school, with Paul Holden.*

Davies: I wonder how you got hold of that!

Riess: I went to the library.

Davies: Oh, you're one of those resourceful people! Ralph--I was going to say he financed it. But I think he did a great deal of it. And he wrote the foreword to it. It was the very first book that was ever done about how businesses are run. They had a whole crew of people who went around to all the big businesses before they wrote that book. It's been reprinted about four times. They put him on the consulting board of the business school. That's how he got involved with Holden and got into this.

Riess: Did he drive into the city with a commute group?

Davies: No, no, he drove in by himself. He wasn't exactly a group person. It was only the last two years of his life that he had a driver. No, he drove all the time. Madly!

* Top Management: Organization and Control, Stanford University, 1941. A research study of the management policies and practices of thirty-one leading industrial corporations.

Rubicon Beach, and Architects

Davies: Well, everything has a little involved story with it. I think the reason we went to Tahoe for our honeymoon--although Ralph gave me a choice of going there or going to San Diego, to the big hotel there, the Coronado--I kind of think it was because of H. T. Harper, at Standard. He liked Harper, and Harper certainly liked him. (This is a long story.) The Harpers still have a little property on Rubicon Beach that was the only place, before there was a road around, that used to be a resort. The other side was all lumber that was cut and sent to San Francisco. But the Frost resort on Rubicon Beach--Harper's wife was a Frost, and they owned all the property. Mr. Frost lost it, and so Harper bought it from him. Then it went into the Tevis estate to be all sold, all the rest of the beach. Well, Mr. [Howard] Fletcher was working for the Anglo Oil, or something, and so we rented the Fletcher house.

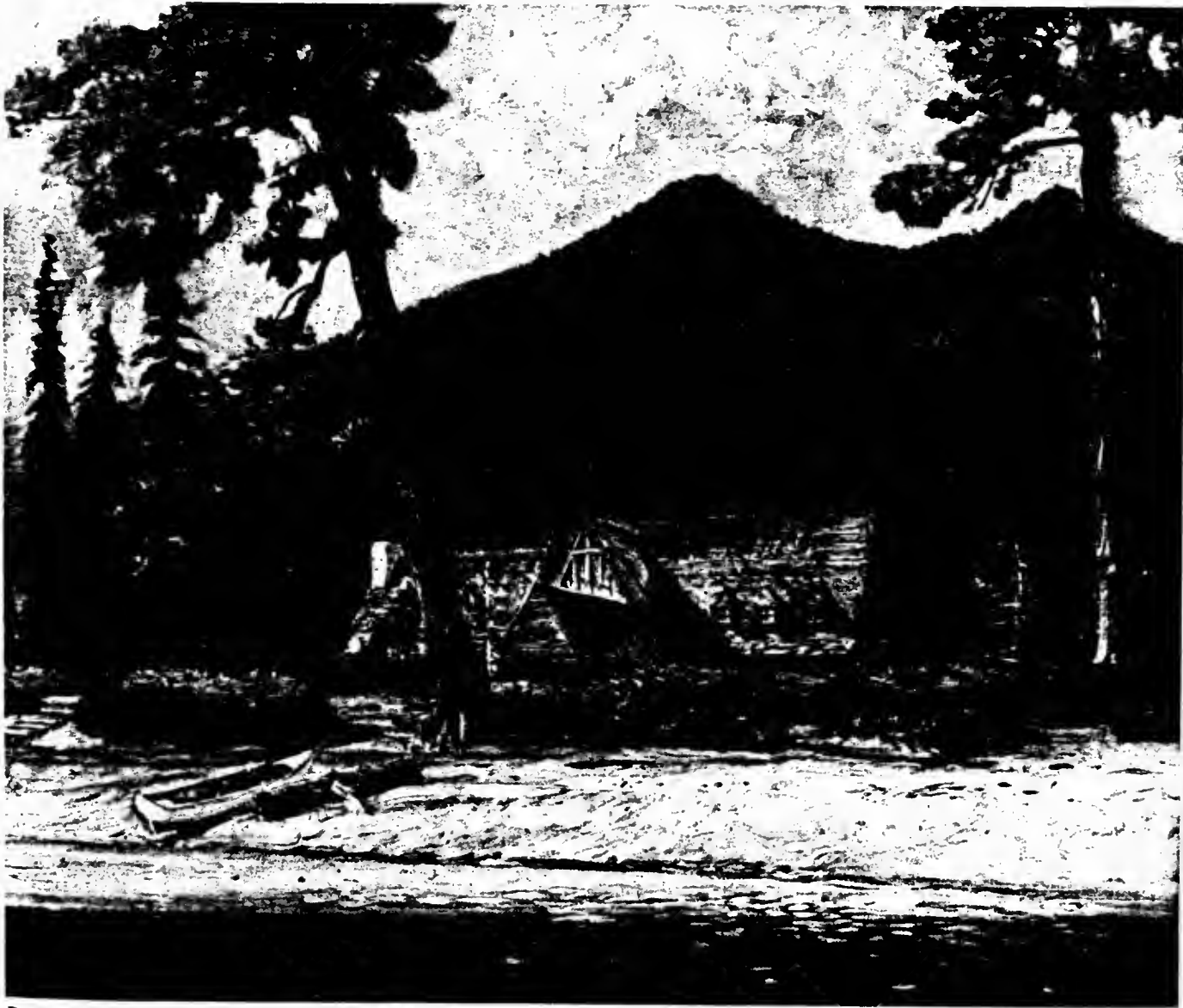
Then in 1932 we bought. We bought more than anybody else. I used to say it was eight hundred feet, but now they tell me it was only seven hundred. This was crazy, and I was upset, mad, as a matter of fact, that we should buy up there, and we didn't own anything down here. But he liked it. I don't think he knew that it was going to be so valuable. It was just the Irish again. They want property. We were renting down here, and yet we buy eight hundred feet at Tahoe where we only go in the summer! Anyway, it turns out that it was tremendously valuable. Not that we'll get any money, because my children love it, and I'm sure they'll never, never sell it.

Riess: Who was the architect for the Tahoe house?

Davies: Gardner Dailey built the house.

Riess: How did you choose him?

Davies: I think the story was that Ralph and Frank Buck went to see Gardner Dailey, at his office. He was already prominent; they heard he was the best. Well, he kept them waiting. Ralph, even at that point, he didn't like to wait. Frank Buck said, "This is too long. You go and tell that man that we want to build a house. If he's not interested, we're leaving." Well, he came out like a shot. They used to like to tell that story. It ended up that Gardner Dailey thought Ralph was one of the greatest men in the world; they liked each other. He built our house at Tahoe as a replica of a Normandy seacoast house. That was when he was in periods. He used to stay with the Bucks when he was building the house. A long time ago. [musing]



Davies' House at Rubicon Beach, Lake Tahoe Painted by A. Sheldon Pennoyer, Circa 1937

He wanted to build this house, but he was then well ensconced and in demand. He [Dailey] wanted to build a house for Ralph that he'd built a lot of, a circular house. He built a circular house for Stanford. He was in that period then. But Ralph would have none of it. Ralph liked Gardner Dailey, but people reach a certain stage. Gardner Dailey could have any house he wanted. People were after him a lot, like Frank Lloyd Wright. He could pick and choose. You know, he killed himself in the end. He had something--he wasn't going to live, I know. We knew Gardner Dailey quite well. Has anybody written a story about him? He grew up as a very poor boy in Stockton. He put himself through college by helping people with their gardens, a high class gardener or something.

Riess: And then Wurster, you knew him?

Davies: Well, because we knew Dailey, we knew the Wursters. One of the funniest parties I ever went to those long years ago was at Tommy Church's, the first one who did our garden. In those years all these artists lived in San Francisco's hills. That's where Wurster had his place. His was an old fashioned house, and all the furniture was like my firehouse, Victorian, and here he was building these very modern things!

Church had invited us to dinner. I think he'd cooked it--I can't remember what now--but it was awfully funny. There were a whole dozen of us in a little tiny place. Then we were going visiting all over. It's not like that any more, but everybody knew each other. They'd go in and have a drink here, or a drink there, or visit, and then come back. That was a long, long time ago.

Riess: The Churches lived on Hyde Street.

Davies: But this was before then. Long before then. I don't think he was even married then. I can't remember. I remember that Barbara Sutro was going with one of those men, I can't remember which, so I think it was before they were married. Must have been. Awful long time ago.

It was the kind of party that San Francisco used to flourish with. They all had open houses. They didn't have much money, but they all entertained, somehow or other. You'd go from one house to another. What we had that night I remember was a great big salad and lots and lots of French bread. Then we went some place else for dessert which I think was cream-puffs.

Riess: Did you consider Frank Lloyd Wright for this house?

Davies: No, no. But everybody in town, about six architects, tried to get this house. They would give us plans, and Ralph paid them off but he didn't like them.

Riess: And Wurster?

Davies: I don't think he did a plan for us.

We had [Harvey] Clark, who just died. And who's the other one? They did French Provincial, or something-something. Actually, I thought French Provincial was pretty nice. Anyway, we didn't do it.

Alice Meyer and Frank Buck

Davies: Soon the Bucks came up to Tahoe. They bought the property next to ours, and they built, and that's how we became such good friends. Forever and ever we were the best of friends.

Riess: Are these anything to do with the Marin County Bucks?*

Davies: No, no, no, you're way off. Not the same at all.

Alice Buck was a Meyer. Her father, Eugene Meyer, was born in Alameda, but when he was six years old they took him back to France, and he was there and studied there until he was eighteen. Of course people didn't go to college at that time much. He went to work for Wells Fargo Bank at the age of eighteen. Then he decided to be a banker himself, he and Borel. Meyer was the real brains, but Borel was the outside man. He was a private banker, and they supplied everybody with money. They were the ones that financed Stanford when they were building the transcontinental railroad. How do you get that money? [laughs] Because they didn't really have it.

Riess: How about Frank Buck himself?

Davies: He worked for Golden State. He worked up. By the time they were married he was president of Golden State, which is now Foremost.

* Leonard and Beryl Buck. At the death of Mrs. Buck the San Francisco Foundation received shares in an oil company that were worth \$260 million, which fortune was stipulated for non-profit purposes in Marin County.

They lived right next door to us at Stanford, and then they bought and built right next door to us at Tahoe. One reason we became very good friends was because they didn't have any children. As I said, we named our Alice for her. Alice Buck's family on her mother's side --what was her name?

Briefly, they met in the Gold Rush, about 1849, I guess. Two men. Shattuck and the other one's name started with B. They were gold mining and they were alone and one of them became sick and he lay down and the other fellow came over and said--in those days people helped each other--and he said, "I don't know, I'm not very well." And the other one said, "Well, I will put you on my donkey and we will go out together."

They became great friends, and they came down to Oakland and they started a hardware store. They bought it, according to Alice, for about 14 or 20 thousand dollars, which was a lot of money in 1849. Everybody needed tools then to go up to mine gold. And they bought all the land that Berkeley is on for nothing--probably they paid a dollar or something for it. So these people must have been awfully smart, because Oakland was nothing at that time, but they realized that there should be a school and they gave that land out there to the people that started the university. Alice Buck lived in Berkeley, and she graduated from Berkeley. For a long time she didn't get married--she had one love affair that she tells about, and I think he died. She was thirty-six, and she thought she was going to be an old maid, as they called them in those days, until she met Frank. She met him because her father owned part of the stock of Golden State.

The story of how they fell in love is that they were driving on a bridge and she went off the bridge--she told me she never knew whether it was her fault--the car fell down about twenty feet into a ditch, and she said that he broke his back. (The people who sit next to you always fare worse than the driver.) She got out, and he couldn't move. And she looked at him, and she realized then that he meant a lot to her, that she really loved the man. It took an accident! Later on, a year or so later, they were married. Her father couldn't get over it because he thought--. She was devoted to her father. Her father was a brilliant man, and very dominating. He was like my husband in a way. Ralph was not very dominating, except in a kind of minor way. But Alice's father really ruled. She said, "My poor mother really couldn't do anything." In those days men were dominating.

Riess: Frank was a man Ralph was very comfortable with?

Davies: Oh, very. He was a self-made man, as was Ralph. They had a lot in common.

I have been lucky to have as friends people who were older than I am, people who have lived through a lot, because I wouldn't have had all this experience without knowing them. I didn't come from that kind of family--or group is what it was. Alice introduced me to a whole society. She graduated from Berkeley in about 1906 herself.

The other Bucks, the Walter Bucks, were extremely wealthy. He owned National Distillery, but he was tighter than a tick! Ralph was on the Franklin Hospital board, and they needed all new buildings, and he went to Walter Buck and he gave \$5,000 when he easily could have given \$200,000. When he died he gave it to Marie Ducato--these people you don't know. Her mother was a Buck, I guess. She wanted to give her home to the county, and they didn't take it. It's really an enormous house, ceilings that go up and up, and twelve acres around it. Anyway, Mitzi Briggs bought it. Her mother was a Segal, who owned not the majority, but a great deal of Stauffer Chemical. Very, very, very rich.

Woodside, House and Garden

Riess: To get to this house.

Davies: We bought the property in 1936. Originally it was twenty-three acres. Now we only have eighteen, because they took three to make the Moore Road. Amazingly, it was \$22,000 when we bought the property.

Riess: Did you have horses?

Davies: Yes. We have one horse left. Ellen lived in New Zealand for two or three years, and Deborah became very horse-minded. She brought back the horse we have up there now. It's about thirty years old! They called me up from Stanford Stables to say, "Sandy is too old. We're going to sell him for glue," unless we took him.

Riess: You have a Thomas Church garden. Did Church come in the beginning and help Anshen and Allen site the house?

Davies: Yes, he did. Of course if we had known that Route 280 was coming in, we would never have placed it right here. That 280 is a constant noise. Church really placed the house here. He did the garden before we built the house. That was my idea. I kept getting mad at



Davies Residence, Woodside, California



St. Francis Woodcarving



Gardens at the Davies Residence in Woodside



Ralph that here we had this property, and we were still renting in Atherton. He was very choosy, and we had these architects doing designs, and not until we had the Anshen and Allen plans did we start building. We owned this property since 1936, and we didn't build until 1938. Anyway, he said, "Well, all right, if you're so anxious, why don't you get the garden started."

Riess: Do you recall why you chose Church?

Davies: I don't know. He was just getting known when he was here. He built the garden in 1936. He wasn't anything like as well-known as he was later. He had, though, a great deal of determination. He gave me about three plans which I didn't like at all. He had gone to Europe and studied French gardens which were rather formal. I said, "Look, Tommy"--we got to know each other very well--"I'm not a formal person, and I don't think this hill is formal. It has a contour." He said, "All right." Then when he came back, and I can see him now, bless his heart, he threw down these plans and he said, "If you don't like that you'd better get another landscape gardener." And it was what we liked.

We were really one of the first to have a Thomas Church garden. We probably got to know him through Gardner Dailey. They collaborated a lot later on. Tommy was pretty good at the time, too.

Riess: When were you first asked to open your garden to a tour?

Davies: I don't know. It's on tours all the time now. But I don't know. I'll tell you one of the first I remember, because Ralph surprised me. (He always surprised me; everybody surprised me.)

The Garden Club of America came, and it was in early spring. This was one of the first ones. (The Garden Club is coming again next year. Four hundred people descend on the Bay Area. Piedmont, and San Francisco and Woodside entertain all those people.) Our house was on the tour. So Ralph went down--he really had a lot of imagination, it never would have occurred to me--he went down and got a mother duck, a pretty one, and her babies. We didn't have a statue in the middle of the pond then, I remember. It was pretty, it was alive, and it was his idea. They even took a picture of it, and it came out in the yearbook of the Garden Club of America. As I remember it was a terrible day. It rained, and everybody had to put on rubbers to go down. But here was this duck floating around with all the little ducklings.

I have an awful lot of those tours. It's not particularly to see the garden, but because it's large. People give functions in it.

Riess: Usually house and garden tours are fundraisers.

Davies: I think in a way they're taking the place of fashion shows, and I'm sick and tired of fashion shows, although we still have them. It's different now, but there were these six fashion shows a year. Now I think they're not very many. We've had many, many here. We had three last year. We had that children's fashion show too. I'm supposed to go to one next week at the Buck Meyer House. Saks is putting it on. It's for some benefit. I just discovered that I can't go, but they're making me the honorary chairman. It's for some benefit of some kind. That's what all those dinners you go to are about. They put somebody up there, and hope the company will all respond. And they have to.

Riess: Well, it's a very interesting kind of business. I think a person's house is a private place, and their garden is a private place. It's very nice you give yours.

Davies: Is there anything private anymore? Alice Buck would have been appalled at having this, or my even lending myself to something like this. But I think that's all gone out of fashion, hasn't it? She didn't even like to have her name in the paper.

Riess: There is this cult of the personality now.

Davies: She said, "Only common people do that." She didn't say "common" but she said, "I don't think you should." But now everybody does it. It's supposed to be for a good cause; that's why you do it.

Riess: In this country, it's always for a good cause. In England, the stately homes have to be opened because the English can't afford to keep them up, so they really need to have those tour days.

Davies: Then the people get involved, whether they want to or not. And they probably do. I went on one of these things in 1960—and maybe I'll go again this year. The National Trust Tours—people open their houses, and they usually give a lunch, or a tea, or a dinner. I still belong to that English National Trust. That's what got me started. We went to houses that ordinary people don't go to. And the women and the men, I remember at that time, in 1960, they were saying how wonderful we Americans were. We saved them, you know, from the war. So they were very gracious to us. But I don't think they open to all, these same people. I don't know. Because they're quite different than we are, the English. Especially those landed houses. They have just as much trouble inside, but it's a little different. They live in one we visited for five generations. They still do in Georgia, but not here in California. It's very unusual to be in a house for even one generation, let alone five. But that's where they have an advantage, I guess.

An Unforgettable Party, and Lucien Labaudt's Murals

Riess: How did you come to have the Lucien Labaudt murals in the dining room?

Davies: We went to England as I told you, in 1928. I came back in 1930 to have Maryon, and Ralph went right back to work on this paving business, the macadamized roads. When he came home I was probably about eight months pregnant. He said I was the biggest woman he had ever seen in his life. You were supposed to eat in those days. I weighed 180 pounds!

In Germany he had met Malcolm Beranger. He had the idea of a mixture of tar to pave roads that Standard finally bought. So Ralph and Beranger became great friends--well, sort of great. Beranger was a very, very ambitious man. This is how ambitious he was, that Standard Oil said they'd like to have him, and he said, "Fine, I will come, and you will pay all my expenses, and I will do this, and not that," and so forth. Well, Standard Oil did. So he sold his bitumel formula to them, on the condition that he and his wife be here for six months for a high, high salary. He lived high on the hog. At that point, when we were not exactly in the news, or anything, he said to me, "Now, your husband's going to be a very prominent man. You should give parties." He kept telling me this. I told Ralph and he said, "You tell him to mind his own business!"

Anyway, how we met Lucien Labaudt: Beranger met Lucien Labaudt and he said, before the house was built, that he would give the money--I don't think he did, but he said he would, because he only got here because of Ralph--to do the murals in this room by Lucien Labaudt.

He did, though, give the best party himself. The other night we went to the dinner for the Queen at the de Young [March 3, 1983], and except for Beranger's dinner given at the St. Francis for Mr. Berg, who was then president of Standard Oil--and there must have been a hundred others there--it was the most elaborate dinner I've ever been to.

The other dinner, Beranger gave it, and Standard Oil paid for it, and it was even better in a way. The food, the entertainment, I'll never in a thousand years forget it. First, they took over the whole lower part of the St. Francis. We had one room that was nothing but hors d'oeuvres and canapes. Oh, he was a very extravagant man. The very best pate de foie gras. You went from table to table. The dinner didn't start until about nine.

They had ice sculptures on the tables, and torches lighting the room. The St. Francis has a uniform that is very elaborate--the Queen couldn't have done better. Gold braid, and so forth. The first course was pheasant--it was brought in by the waiters in these full uniforms--golden pheasants with long tails. They paraded all over the room, up and down, to the beat of music. It was just the most elaborate thing. They do this sort of thing in Europe, with the entertainment between the courses. It was a European dinner, really. Music, dancers, and I think they even had clowns.

Riess: Beranger was here for a year. Communicating the secrets of asphalt paving?

Davies: Yes. He was only the promoter. They had to pay for this formula. But he knew everybody in town in one week, everybody worth knowing. He just met all of them, like that! We couldn't get over it.

Riess: Why did he only stay for a year?

Davies: Standard Oil thought that was enough.

Riess: Did you watch Labaudt doing the murals?

Davies: Oh, yes. We'd come down here. He was a delightful man, kind of unusual man--though everybody's unusual, some more than others.

One day I particularly remember, he brought down a leg of lamb, and he got two poles, branches from a tree, and he put the leg of lamb on a rope, and he built a big fire under it. First, he saturated the lamb with all kinds of things, cloves of garlic, whatever. We all sat around. He was a great story-teller, and he played the banjo. He thought that everything should be a very happy occasion. I could write a whole book about Lucien, but I can well remember that day in particular.

Riess: Did he do other work for you?

Davies: No, but we knew them very, very well. After he died--he died in 1942 in an airplane that the government had sent to China or something--his widow, Marcelle Labaudt, who I know very well--and she is about ninety and in a home--carried on his idea of having a show in the gallery they owned on Gough Street. She did it all these years, all by herself. She would give a show for unknown artists.

One day I'm going to give a party in Coit Tower. He worked for the WPA. During the war he was a riveter. He would bring home all the riveters, whether they were Chinese, Black, or what. He was a wonderful cook, and so was his wife, and we would go there in the

kitchen--this is really, truly French--and have this big feast. It wasn't elaborate, but it was very good. We became very good friends. They afterwards named a ship after him, a Kaiser ship.

Riess: Did he have assistants working with him on the job down here?

Davies: One girl, whose father did all the murals in the Interior building in Washington. It was kind of interesting watching him. I told him what to do, and Anshen and Allen couldn't stand what I told him to do. They never spoke to him! [laughter] They wanted something quite different, but I said, "No, this is what I want." They didn't like what he did. They were very, very opinionated.

Riess: Did you work with any decorators in designing the interior?

Davies: Yes, I did in the beginning. But this house was really done by Anshen and Allen: we still have the table and those chairs in the dining room which were designed by them. This is a Frank Lloyd Wright idea. He thought that all the furniture ought to go with the house. I disagreed with him heartily. The living room had a great, big sofa. I got rid of it when we could afford another one. I hated it! But the dining room is very good.

Riess: When Ralph commissioned them, did he know they would take over so completely?

Davies: No, not at all, no. They were two years building this place, you know. We became very good friends, naturally.

Riess: I don't see why.

Davies: No, no. He let them do it, and I let them do it. I really hadn't much to say about it.

Riess: But in the book you said that Ralph told them, "Let Louise decide."

Davies: Yes, but at that point--my goodness, they kind of lived here, those two men. Until I felt, well, maybe it's a good idea. As I said, I couldn't stand the living room, so I threw out one sofa and all the chairs. But the dining room table is really beautiful. It's laminated and it's maple and it's quite different.

Riess: The sofa was architectural looking?

Davies: Very architectural, very stiff. Looked like the architecture. Not comfortable.

Riess: After the house was completed was there a lot of interest in it?

Davies: Oh, yes, and many architects came to see it, because it was really the first of its kind around here. It was kind of unbelievable. So many windows. Nobody had a house like this before.

Riess: How much of a staff do you need to keep it up?

Davies: Oh, a cook. I have a cleaning woman once a week. And I have a gardener on the place. I've tried having a couple, but it hadn't worked. Usually one in a couple is good and one is not so good.

Riess: Did you have other decorators?

Davies: Later we got to know Michael Taylor through Maryon. He wanted to start out by himself, and it was put in the paper, so Maryon introduced him to Ralph. Ralph loaned him, he said, his first thirty thousand. Michael had worked for Eleanor Elkus. She was supposed to be the best known decorator in the United States. She did the women's house at the fair at Treasure Island. She came from a very wealthy family. Her daughter is very into politics, Mrs. George. She left her house to Monterey, and it's now the Capital Club, a men's club, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has it.

Riess: What room did Michael Taylor do for you?

Davies: The living room. That was a long time ago. I think the only thing we have left is the sofas. And he copied the chairs from Elkus. They really are not very comfortable. They're good looking. He got that sideboard there. And he did the drapes. They've been done about thirty years ago. I guess he made those sofas. I can't remember.

Riess: When do you think that would have been, in the forties?

Davies: Oh, a long time ago. When we could afford it. We moved in here in 1940, so it must have been about 1950, I guess, when Michael came along. Yes, I guess the other chairs are his too. Might be. I know the curtains were, because we had a long discussion about what to put up. [Michael Taylor, born 1927, died in 1986.]

Designer Houses, Foreign Families

Riess: This was really country, when you moved here?

Davies: Right, oh yes, it was. We bought this in '36. We always said--at least I do--we had twenty-three acres for twenty-two thousand. Now they're worth about three hundred thousand an acre. It shows you how things change. Moore Road constantly is changing. There are four houses over there now for sale, and their prices are way, way up. I don't know who's going to buy them. This is a very interesting story. My neighbor, Kathy [Mrs. W. John] Buchanan--how long has she been working for the Symphony? Going on about four years, because she was there at the opening of the Symphony. She does this all for love, and she goes up every morning. Sometimes I call her at quarter past eight, and she's gone.

Last year they had a vacant house on Moore Road that was built by--she's now Mrs. Chickering, she was Fisher--they built this big house at the end of Moore Road with lots of bedrooms, very scenic, but the people who bought it say that they had all the windows sealed because they had all that noise from 280. I get a terrific noise from 280 way up here, so theirs must have been terrible. So they had a hard time, I think, selling it. I don't know what they finally got for it.

But anyway, before they sold it they used it for the Symphony's Design House. It was quite something. Every room was done by a different designer and you paid--I'm paying twenty-five dollars per person on the 18th, the opening, which is a week from yesterday. Then it's open on the 19th for a month, or six weeks or something, and you go for ten dollars a day or something.

Kathy Buchanan told me, "I've got a mission. I'm going over to see the people who own the [Selah] Chamberlain house." She said, "I hear some Chinese people own it [Victor Kwans]. I'm going to ask them if we can have it for the next designer house. I hear that they're from Hong Kong and very rich, and the reason they're here is because they have a daughter who goes to Sacred Heart." (Sacred Heart has all these people from Hong Kong and India, half of their girls are from the Orient.) So, "Good luck." Well, they looked into it, first of all, to see if it might be possible. She said they opened the door, and there was a little Chinese lady in there. "I guess it was the maid."

She asked could she see Mrs. Kwan. I don't know whether she got it the first day or not, or whether she had to go back. But what they did get was yes, they can have the house. The Kwans rented an apartment in Atherton for two months, and they moved out.

Isn't that the most unusual story you ever heard! They moved them out as of three weeks ago. It's an old, old house, and they're going to have to work on it. Michael Taylor is the overall designer.

Riess: Why is Sacred Heart such a magnet for girls from the Orient?

Davies: It has been for years. You know, in Tokyo they have a Sacred Heart Convent. The Kwans, Ed sold his house to them, the great big house that sold for about two million, I think. Their daughters went to Sacred Heart in Tokyo. She said all the prominent people--she didn't say it that way, but I mean the wealthy Japanese people--all their girls went to Sacred Heart. It was the thing to do for years and years and years.

Then they afterwards went to Paris. Somebody in the Kitamuras, I think, must be quite wealthy. Now he's in the government. He was in France and someplace else. He said that San Francisco was the tops. If you get to be the consul in San Francisco, you've reached the top. I got to know them very well. They came here and had dinner. They went to Aspen. It was a convention for executives, and they sent them. These Japanese--aren't they something! They couldn't be nicer. They're just the most charming, especially the woman. He's nice too, but I mean he's to me like any aggressive businessman, whether Japanese, Chinese, or American, but she's something rather special.

I don't know where she comes from, but a very special sort of person, a very delicate, cultivated lady, somebody that you'd like to be a personal friend to. Kind of gentle soul. She showed us--not flower arrangements, but arrangements with sand, pictures in sand and some kind of rocks and things, very unusual. She's just a lovely lady. Then I met the nice consul general, and they're very nice, too, very young people. When I say young, they're in their middle forties. So were the Kitamuras, but these Japanese people are coming in. We're being taken over.

At one time, we knew the Kuwaitis. My husband had this American Petroleum Company, and we certainly entertained the Kuwaitis and about a half dozen times we gave huge parties for the Yemenis. My husband had these oil wells, and they were part of it. Oh, we got to know them quite well, and they always brought their families.

Riess: Were the wives shy creatures?

Davies: No, these people are very much at home in the world.

Riess: Sophisticated?

Davies: It isn't sophistication. How is it? It's sort of naivete or something. They look like children, and that's what they are, just getting acquainted with the world. You bring them out of the hills and they feel perfectly natural, they don't feel uncomfortable.

Considering that, about a month or so ago I went to Gump's. Sitting there were two very young women. They were obviously Arab ladies. They were in their twenties. One of them was very pregnant. The saleslady, whom I know quite well, said they had bought a dozen dresses and they were taking them with them. I was waiting for my purchase, so I spoke to them. I said, "Are you here for very long?" I said my husband was with Standard Oil, and so forth. They said no, they were leaving tomorrow or the next day or something. They were putting some of their children down here, too. One of the boys was going to Menlo Atherton or something. I said, "Oh, you're just traveling through?" That's why they came, to put the boy in the school. I don't know what was the other thing about it. But they go there.

The lady who waits on me said, "Yes, they're taking a dozen dresses." On sight, I mean, they didn't even try them on. [laughter] They have so much money they have no need. Well, they like that color, so--. [laughs] But they wear those ones that anybody could wear actually. They didn't have to try them on. This is something unbelievable that's going on at the same time of all the poor people, right here, that don't have enough to eat. It's rather awful, isn't it. They have no idea what money means, these people.

V MORE ABOUT RALPH

Letters from Washington

Riess: I'm trying to get the picture of things between the time Ralph knew he wasn't going to be the president of Standard Oil, and when he went to Washington to be deputy petroleum administrator.

Davies: He was very upset. I knew it. It was awful. He never really got over it. In a way I think it gave him cancer. These things happen to our bodies. He couldn't have been more upset. Thank God Mr. Ickes came along. From 1932 on he was back in Washington, back and forth. Ickes was a very forceful man. He came out and went to a meeting of the Standard Oil people here and he told them--he said that this man [Ralph] deserves being president. I think it was he who helped Ralph--well, I don't know, Ralph was pretty much his own man. Ralph was then gotten into a world situation with Ickes. So although it hurt him not to be president, because it was a lifetime ambition, this other job was the making of him. Being a Standard Oil president is a pretty big job if you don't have something else in mind, but he had many other things in mind at that point.

Riess: Have you read President Truman's letters to Bess that are now available? Wonderful, long letters.

Davies: Yes, isn't it lovely. We knew them a bit too, the Trumans.

Riess: Did you and Ralph exchange letters too? Once a week to you, "at home."



Louise Davies amuses Harry Truman at lunch aboard the American President Lines S.S. President Hoover. Bess Truman and Mrs. George Killion are the rest of the party. Probably 1947.



Louise Davies with members of the Woodside Fire Protection District, May 1982.

Davies: Lord, no. I have kept a couple. But he would phone. Sometimes he would write a nice, long letter, but that was very sometimes. He was not that sort. All businessmen do this: they phone, nobody writes letters.

They [the Trumans] went out on the ship to Hawaii, on the American President Lines. Ellen, my daughter, went, and Bertie Benoist, and also Adlai Stevenson. Can you imagine all this? Somebody had given Mr. Truman an island, some very wealthy people who owned it. Before they left, Mr. George Killion gave a big party in Piedmont. (George Killion was the former president of the American President Lines.) Then the next day they sailed, and they had an enormous cocktail party, so we all went to that. Margaret, the daughter, went out with them too. Then they came back. (Ellen went on, with Adlai Stevenson, and they became very friendly, which is another long story.)

Anyway, they came back and we went out--they do this with ships--on a launch to meet them at the Golden Gate and go on board. I have a picture upstairs of it that is very funny. We were having lunch and Truman was very upset about something Eisenhower was doing. He said, "He shouldn't do that. The boy shouldn't do that!" And she said, "Now, Papa, you're not there any longer. You better forget it." He said, "You know, it's pretty hard to give up the reins when you've been there. He's making a mistake. I'd like to tell him."

But she told him to be quiet. They had this kind of relationship. He said, "Well, I'll try. But believe me, I'd like to tell him." The Trumans had a kind of a give and take that is the way a relationship should be. Those letters would show that. He evidently adored her. I know she said it was a relief to be out of the White House. She sounded like a normal person.

Riess: When he wrote, did Ralph talk about what he was doing, with Ickes and so on?

Davies: No, not that kind of letter at all. You know, he really could have written a lot. He had a very great ability to write. This Lucy of mine has the same thing, and I think it was inherited. I have really about two letters of his that I kept that are really quite exceptional.

My young grandson, Ralph, he keeps a diary. Once I took him down to see the writer who did Mabel and Maude, or Maude and Mabel. What is that famous movie? It now has forty million people who belong to a club. Ralph had written to him, because at that time he wanted to be a movie actor. And he said to Ralph, "You write awfully well. Did you ever think of trying to write?" This

grandson Ralph writes every day. Somewhere along in his school life either somebody told him to do it, or he decided he wanted to do it.

I said to him not long ago, "Ralph, do you still write every day?" And he said, "Nana, I've had that habit since I don't know when. It's one thing I do, maybe not every day."

Ralph could write. At one time I remember he said that maybe he would like to write.

Riess: Would you be willing to share one of his letters, or include one in the oral history?

Davies: I'll have to go and look. I kept a couple of his letters. He liked to write. Doesn't everybody, in a way?

Riess: Do you think he was more expressive in writing than he was in person?

Davies: Yes, I think so. I think in every one of us there's probably about three strong elements. You could have gone three different ways, couldn't you? At one time, he liked to draw designs of houses and things. He was always making designs. And you know his brother was a painter.

Harold Ickes, and the Oil Brotherhood

Riess: In Fightin' Oil [Knopf, 1943] Ickes says, "I had prevailed upon Ralph K. Davies of San Francisco, ranking Vice President of the Standard Oil Company of California, to come to Washington for the duration as a full-time government employee. He became the Deputy Co-ordinator, later Deputy Administrator. I told Mr. Davies that I wanted him to employ the best men that he could find--to get men from the industry--men who knew oil." [pp. 73, 74]

Davies: I think he got \$1 a year! Ralph, when he was in Washington, took complete charge. He made a lot of enemies, because everybody wanted to get into the act, and they thought they knew better than he did. He really ran it himself, he did this job alone, but it made him enemies among oil people. He also made a lot of friends, because when he came home he started his own oil company, the American Petroleum Company. He had an ability to convince people of the worthwhileness of joining him. Right now, Signal Oil owns ten percent of Natomas. And this was a great friend of Ralph's, Sam Mosher, long gone. Ralph got these people to invest in his oil

company [American Petroleum]. You see, if you weren't in good standing, or if the people didn't believe in you, how could you do that?

I well remember they drilled three dry holes, and every hole cost \$500,000. I'd say, "I don't know why you're going on." He didn't say anything, he went right on. And the fourth one came in. But all the money for that was from the other oil companies. He didn't have \$500,000. So he must have had a lot of respect from the other oil companies.

Riess: How did you live on his \$1 a year? [laughs]

Davies: I don't know. We certainly didn't feel any pinch. We never lived, we never do live, extravagantly. I really don't know. After the war he sold the American Petroleum Company for ten million to Phillips Petroleum, and maybe that's in the book, I don't know. He was very much into Phillips Petroleum all those years in Washington or somehow or other. He got to know these people very very well.

Riess: Did he invest in stocks? Was he a speculator in that way?

Davies: No, not at all, and he kept warning other people that it was a very fluctuating thing. Although I know once he told a lady over here, Mrs. Forbes, about something, and she told me that she made a hundred or two hundred thousand overnight on Ralph's advice. Maybe he knew possibly that it would go up, or something. He wouldn't do it ordinarily. She was just an old lady and a dear, dear friend of ours.

Riess: Did he handle his own money, or did he have a financial adviser?

Davies: I kind of think he did it himself. Of course he had advisers, a lot of them.

Riess: Did you care about any of this, or was it all in his hands?

Davies: [laughs] I had nothing at all to do with it. I only got the end of it. If it was a good day, he might tell me something. If it was a bad day, he'd say, "I'm going to take a walk."

Riess: I think I mentioned rationing earlier. I suppose you had to do it, too, despite being the deputy petroleum administrator's wife.

Davies: Oh yes, and the neighbors around here would call and say, "I'm going to do some shopping. Can I get something for you," and so on. We would exchange.

- Riess: Were your neighbors all aware of what Ralph's job was during the war?
- Davies: Not particularly. They knew he was very involved, but I don't think it was generally known that he really had charge of it all.
- Riess: I wondered whether you ever had crank letters or crank calls from people then?
- Davies: No, I didn't. I'm sure he did, but I didn't. I get them now, though, sometimes.

Now it's mostly that they want me to support something, and I tell them I don't do anything over the phone, to write me a letter. And the letters--I used to answer them, but now I don't. I guess if people don't hear from somebody they know that it's out.

- Riess: Did people use you to try to influence Ralph?
- Davies: No, not at all.
- Riess: When you talked to Ralph in Washington, did you feel you were hearing inside news? Did he have a good idea of how long the war would last, for instance?
- Davies: No. He was not exactly that communicative, in anything. As I said, I only got things by innuendo.

He told me a long time ago, "After all," he said, "wives have caused a lot of trouble in Standard Oil." I guess they do in any company. If men come home and tell them their troubles, or they tell something, the wives have been known to go out and spill the beans, or talk when they shouldn't. He wasn't talkative anyway, but he wasn't going to get into that.

- Riess: I guess that does happen.
- Davies: Oh, it happens in every company. All I know is Standard Oil, but they say it's typical.
- Riess: Ickes quotes someone in the oil industry who "avowed that 'Ickes would himself have made a great oil man.'" [Fightin' Oil, p. 73] Now, what do you think the definition of a "great oil man" is?
- Davies: Well, first, I never met tougher people. Ralph was, he must have been, tougher than tough. And he was the wildest gambler that ever was, gambling with millions he didn't have! That's why he was not exactly popular, because he didn't enter into, you know, this thing. He helped an awful lot of people.

Riess: What "thing"? The clubbiness of it?

Davies: For one thing, at that time they were all in Shriners--they're not any more--and the other thing. If one wasn't in it, they thought you couldn't get advanced. He was not into that at all. In fact he only went to those things when he thought it was absolutely impossible to get out of it. I know that. [laughs]

Riess: The corporate socializing.

Davies: Yes. It happens in every category of life, if you have a friend whom you're interested in, you're going to advance him, whether or not. And so they do.

Riess: What about groups like the Pacific Union Club, or the Bohemian Club?

Davies: Ralph I remember felt very sorry--. He was invited to belong, and he did belong to the Pacific Union Club, but he was invited to belong to the Bohemian Club right when he was very busy, and he turned it down. He said, "You know, I made an awful mistake. I really should have joined." I think once you say no they don't ask you again. Anyway, they didn't.

Riess: Would he have joined in that case for the company, or for the business aspect?

Davies: Oh, no, no, he was not a businessman per se. He was a businessman of the first order, but he was not the kind that would join "for the sake of." No. He was an individual. That would never have occurred to him. He liked the people that went to the Bohemian Club, and he said it was a mistake to have turned it down. But he was so busy. As I said, it was one crisis after another. The only one he really belonged to was the Pacific Union Club. And that's not a political club. He didn't use it very much. He gave a few parties there.

He used to go to Jack's every day for lunch. Always sat at the same table. Like Louie Lurie. They catered to him like a king. Then lot's of people would go to the Pacific Union for lunch. But he didn't play dominoes, he went in and out. Anyway, Ralph wouldn't have talked.

Riess: Did you say he did play dominoes?

Davies: No. I played dominoes with Uncle George, but he didn't. He liked to do things well. I don't care, though I won't play bridge anymore because I don't play it well. He would attempt to, he would play with me or something. Really when he wanted to do something he wanted to do it well. There are people like that, I guess.

Riess: Did he belong to an athletic club?

Davies: When we first got married he belonged to the Olympic Club. We always belonged to the Menlo. There again, he didn't have time, or whatever it is that it takes to play golf. He took a lot of walks; he wasn't a sitter-downer at all. As I said, he liked to do things well, and he didn't really take time to play golf.

Riess: So, in defining what a great oil man is, you are saying that you can become one without being a "joiner."

Davies: When someone liked Ralph they really liked him. They accepted him just as he was. Then the people who didn't like him didn't like him at all. He had a lot of enemies.

I met [A.W.] Clausen about four years ago, I happened to sit next to him, and he turned to me and he said, "You know, I gave your husband the biggest loan the Bank of America's ever given." I said, "Well, you must have thought he was worth it." He said, "Well, of course I did. But it was kind of extraordinary that I gave it."

You see, what he had was a kind of confidence in himself and when he wanted something he could put that out. I said to somebody, "Nobody ever worked harder than Ralph," and this person said, "A lot of people work as hard as he did and still didn't get there." [laughs] That's true.

Riess: [looking at list of oil company executives in the appendix of Fightin' Oil] Did you know these men? Were they part of your life?

Davies: Gulf Oil, yes we used to know a lot of Gulf. I didn't know this Standard Oil of New Jersey man. H.W. Dodd, we did know him. Texas Company, we knew him because we were quite connected, through Aramco. This was Texas and Cal. He was part of that. Tidewater, yes we knew a lot of Tidewater Oil people, and Cities Service, and [H. K.] Sinclair and his wife [Consolidated Oil Company], and the [J. Howard] Pews [Sun Oil Company], not so well.

These oil people knew each other, Ralph took in two people, one from Shell, the first vice-president, who when his name came up for president he was turned down because he was an American. Ralph took him into his company, American Petroleum. The other one, he really became part of our life. Ralph not only took them in, but he did something kinder than that, he gave them a job, something that they felt important doing. It was kindness to take them in. Ralph wouldn't have put it that way; he'd say, "Well, I needed him." You see, all these oil people know each other quite well. It's like a brotherhood in a sort of a way. I never could get over that Ralph did that. It was extraordinary.

Riess: Speaking of the social life, did Ralph enjoy Lucien Labaudt and that crowd that you came to know?

Davies: Oh, yes. But it was I who got to know them very well, and I continued.

Riess: And before we stop for today, speaking of parties, I was told about a terrific party you treated people to in New Orleans.

Davies: Oh yes, I christened the S.S. Monroe. It's a redo of an old ship, a great big one. It's coming here on April 15th, in fact. I took ten people and we all went down in the Natomas company plane, which is absolutely beautiful. We were met by a band. It was real entertainment. And there was a talk by Senator Inouye of Hawaii, who is evidently a very bright young man.

Publishing, Experimenting, Fears

Riess: Was Ralph ever interviewed in depth?

Davies: Oh, many people came to him and said, "We'd like to write your history," but he didn't do it. I think it was a kind of compliment, but--you know, he could write himself.

The New Yorker once came to him. They wanted to do a thing on him. They actually wanted him to take it over. I never will forget. He spent a whole day with that man, who must have been an interesting man. I was kind of sorry I didn't meet him.

Riess: The publisher?

Davies: Yes. One man had owned the New Yorker for all those years, named Rutherford or something.* He said it was about time that somebody else took it over; Ralph was pleased at the New Yorker invitation. He kind of laughed it off. But it was a flattering thing. This was way back, before he went to Washington, I'm sure, about 1940.

Riess: He strikes me as a perfect person for a New Yorker profile. Following him around on a typical day, and all that.

In the book there is a reference to Ralph's involvement with a magazine publishing business on the West Coast.

Davies: I'll tell you about that. He did it for about a year. I have the copies, up at Tahoe. A great artist did the cover of it. It was very, very clever. Can't think of his name. Ralph had an interest

*Raoul H. Fleischmann.

in writing and in publishing. He also published the Tahoe Tattler for about four years. He renovated it, from 1880. And he got someone over in Berkeley for the first editor. Then that man went on and got a wonderful job. That was a darn good paper. It was interesting.

Then he [Ralph] did the one--the headquarters were in Monterey. I have a whole pack of them up at Tahoe.

Riess: Was it literary?

Davies: No. It was news, but it had a column of history, and a column probably of the flora and fauna. And it was Dali--he did the covers for a couple of issues. I'll think of the name.

Riess: So, the magazine was published in Monterey?

Davies: Yes, I think so. And then the Tahoe Tattler.

Riess: Did he want these publications to get across some point of view?

Davies: No, I don't think so. I think he was just interested in good writing. He bought these publications, and hired the editors. I don't really know why. Why did he buy the American President Lines? [laughs] You see. He liked seagoing things, maybe.

Not many people have the interests that Ralph did. I have a pewter collection that is invaluable, that he collected. And he had an Indian collection that you can't believe, it was so wonderful. And the Russells and Remingtons that I have down in Monterey now.

Riess: What inspired the various interests?

Davies: I don't know. I never knew why he bought the American President Lines. He knew nothing about shipping. He said, "Oh, I thought it would be interesting." Once he entered into something, he really put a lot into it.

Riess: He was an avid New Yorker reader?

Davies: Oh, he loved the cartoons, and the wit. Two other magazines that he read that nobody else seems to read, but they're still going, were the New Republic, and the Nation. Do you know those magazines?

Riess: Of course, and they're very liberal.

Davies: Well, he really read them. Why, I don't know. It's a different type of mind. I never read them.

Ralph really had the feeling--and this probably is true of people who go somewhere, as they call it--that he could do anything, if he put his mind to it. He really didn't have a sense of limitations.

Riess: Another project was an experimental house built in Berkeley using stretched-skin construction, apparently learned from wartime aviation technology.

Davies: Oh, yes. He really did experiment with all kinds of things. Some people just think about it, but he really did try. I mean, he did these things. I think he went into it with Anshen. I don't think it worked, as I remember. Buckminster Fuller did that. Ralph also did a lot of experimenting with roads, paving. He did that at home. Practically burnt the kitchen down. But never mind.

Riess: Tell!

Davies: He was mixing things. He thought he had a formula. Well, it was crazy. He really tried things--as you can see. I guess people whose minds are very active, and ambitious--. He really was ambitious.

Riess: I imagined him generating ideas in an office, not at the stove.

Davies: Yes, stirring up gravel and tar. Well, it is kind of crazy, but that's it. I think he was interested in pre-fab houses too. This is just showing you. He loved architecture, he really did. One time when we were first married he said, "Maybe I should have been an architect. I certainly like it."

Riess: Did he support struggling architects, or inventors?

Davies: These two, Anshen and Allen, this was the first house they ever did. They are the only two I know about.

Riess: Did he do anything else in the kitchen?

Davies: Oh, he was very experimental. He thought, long before we had a dishwasher, that doing dishes--. We'd had a party, and we had stacked the dishes in the sink, so he went out, and instead of washing them, as anybody else would, he got the hose. He said to me, "Oh, go on in and sit down. I'll do the dishes." And that's what he did. I nearly died, because of course he made a terrible mess. [laughter]

I don't think he was satisfied with things as they are. He thought he could improve on them. I would say, "Why are you doing that?" He'd answer something like, "I guess I like to." It just seemed to me way out.

You've never worked for a big company. The Standard Oil owned you, body and soul. They almost told you what to wear, what to do, where to go. It was like that. He didn't belong to that, he couldn't be that way. And he wasn't very well liked because of that. If you don't conform to the whole thing--. So he had all these other ideas. I think he had a mind that was always searching. Some people are like that. Some people just take things as they are. They tell me to relax. Well, I don't have Ralph's kind of mind, but it's hard for me not to be doing something. How about you?

Riess: Oh, I guess I think that doing something is being alive.

Davies: I guess it's better for your health if you can do nothing for a day.

Riess: Can you explain the comment in the book that Ralph made a great mistake in not visiting Kuwait, when American Independent Oil was negotiating there. What was his reason?

Davies: Oh, I know all about that. When he was with Standard Oil he was part of what they called The Four Horsemen. They had to go around--this was when I married him--and find out what was wrong with different offices, and all the troubles they had.

Well, when we were first married he used to tell me, "Now, don't go into a public bathroom." I had no fear at all, but he was intensely scared that I was going to catch something. It was a phobia with him, this sort of thing. I couldn't understand it. It is almost ironic that he died of cancer. One funny story. He was going on a trip on the train and he took a bottle of Lysol with him because he said, "Trains are terrible. They're full of bedbugs and everything like that." So he put Lysol all over, and not just drops of it, and the whole car was full of the smell of Lysol. It was just awful. They had to move, or something.

You see, he was scared to death of getting one of these diseases. Because he had been places where these families had been taken, and he was ultra-cautious about getting something. I never thought of that until now. But that's why he didn't go to Kuwait. He knew it was full of disease, full of catchable things. So the Kuwaitis came here.

A Liberal Streak, and Loyalty to Friends

Riess: In the book, Chandler Ide said there was a streak of liberalism in Ralph, that he had some sympathy for the People's Park situation in Berkeley, "At the same time he was daily disgusted with the strange specimens of the younger generation who were much in evidence in the area near his office. Essentially what bothered him was the lack of independence of the young people, the total lack of evidence of individual thought, the fact that their lifestyle appeared to be nothing but conformance to an empty stereotype. Notwithstanding these misgivings, he toyed a while with the idea of creating a 'people's park' in the midst of the financial district of San Francisco."*

Davies: He was always for the underdog. He was always helping out somebody that he thought didn't have a fair chance. He did kind of marvelous things.

Maybe one thing--Ickes had a son and the son rebelled against his father. I think Ickes and his mother might have wanted to pressure him into something. The minute he finished high school he said he wasn't going to have anything more to do with politics and he was going to be a bum. One day he came here--must have been about 1945--I can see him now. He was very young and very smart--finished high school at sixteen. He had a big hat on and gum boots, and he had a station wagon. Ralph told him he could come up and work on the ranch, and so he did. Ralph's manager up there [Sheldon A. Bell], put him to work. And this fellow [Bell] after the son had been up there for two years he said to him, "Don't you really want to go to college?" So he came down and went to Stanford, but he was still an isolationist. He lived in a car, or something way off, and he wouldn't socialize. It was all a reaction.

Riess: Ralph had a lot of sympathy for that?

Davies: He really did. Why, I don't know, but there it was. I kind of can understand it, but I can't express it. I think he felt like an outsider to many of these people. He came into Standard Oil from a whole different angle than most people do.

Riess: I was interested that Harley Stevens was very much part of Ralph's life.

* Ralph K. Davies, As We Knew Him. p. 20.

Davies: Yes. He was with Pillsbury, Madison and Sutro, and he was such an individual, he didn't get along there. I guess I told you that Ralph had at least four or five people who had reached the top in something but were never really given the top, and they would come to him, and he had compassion for them, I think. Ralph gave Harley the job of going all around the world.

Gigi [Georgianna] Stevens, his wife, was a very interesting woman. She went with him, everywhere. She's written quite a few books. They're really kind of beyond me. About Palestine, and all this. She came from Portland. She was very involved in World Affairs Council. Her sister Jean is married to Kuhn. First she was married to Bob Kirkwood, who was rather wealthy, a public official of some kind. Her mother was the head of the Republican Party in Portland. When Bob Kirkwood died, she married Mr. Kuhn. (He owns a big, big ranch down here in San Jose.) Now the son, Bob Kirkwood's son, is marrying my next door neighbor's [Austin Haynes] granddaughter. Interesting. I got that girl a job with the World Affairs Council. It was sort of in the family. I used to go to the World Affairs Council, and I used to go to Asilomar every year for meetings there.

Riess: Another question I have is what Ralph's relationship with J. Paul Getty was.

Davies: Getty was the stingiest man that God ever made, with all these millions. He and Ralph used to fight, evidently, quite a lot. Chandler Ide could tell you about that. But even if they fought each other they kind of liked each other too. Ralph believed in high pay, because he said then people will work harder and they'll be more loyal. I think he got that idea from Standard Oil. They had a reputation of paying well. Getty had the opposite idea. Paying the least possible, so then they'd work harder to get there. That's just a small indication.

Riess: Did you see those Gettys socially?

Davies: No, no.

Right now, the son, Gordon--my daughter Maryon sees them a lot--they are so rich! They don't know how much they own, billions! He's very musical. She's a girl that came from Lodi. It's just kind of amazing!

I suppose there are books about J. Paul Getty. I know a lot about that family, but that's not interesting so much to you. Getty was quite a wild fellow. He came into the world with a lot of money. This was quite different from Ralph. He was really a rich man before he ever started all this. He and Ralph were friendly enemies, I think you'd call it.

Riess: Well, the connections between these people are interesting. Small town.

Davies: That's the part, as I grow older, that amazes me. Take the Packards, they really are small-town people. For instance, Louise Packard asked me the other day if I would help a boy who's in the hospital, to give him \$600. Here they're giving millions away. Yet she said to me, "I think he deserves it." I said, "If you think so, I will." But that's just as if you said, "Would you give me a hundred dollars for a little boy that needs an operation." [laughter] It's kind of ridiculous. But you see what I mean, they're not people that show off their wealth at all.

[Looking at clipping from April 18, 1983, Chronicle, about a luncheon for Louise Davies on board the S.S. Monroe, American President Lines container ship docked in Oakland which Mrs. Davies christened in New Orleans earlier in the year] Oh, you read that! Wasn't that cute! What they did, which interested me, was they had the social people, social columnists, and they had the mayor of Oakland, a black married to a white woman, and then they had the transportation chief, who is Japanese or Chinese. Then they had all the officials of Oakland there, which kind of amazed me.

They did it for two reasons--well, maybe for half a dozen reasons, you never can tell! The reason they did it was that although they have all these ships they have a lot of competition, and the more exposure they can get, the better. I know three years ago they had Sea-land trying to get the business the same as the President Lines. They don't get to the point where they bribe them, but believe me, they have to work hard to get this business. You should see that thing, three football fields long, the biggest container ship in the world. They're going to have to work hard to fill that thing up!

Medical Center, and the "Giving Business"

Riess: How did Ralph's interest in Franklin Hospital begin?

Davies: He knew this person, Dick [Richard Y.] Dakin, who was married to Susannah [Bryant] Dakin. She comes from the very, very well-known family. She wrote a lot. She had a lot of money, and she was a kind of unusual person.

You know, they all went down in a plane, Susannah and her husband and their three children. There was one left.

Riess: Henry Dakin. He has the toy business.

Davies: Anyway, how Ralph got there: I guess he was the next one in line to be president [of the Executive Committee of the Franklin Hospital Foundation], so when they went down--and we knew them not awfully well, but we went to their house a couple of times, for parties--he was the next in line.

It was started, the hospital, in about 1914, which is an interesting thing. It was called the German Hospital. Then when the war came anything German was changed, so they called it Franklin--for Benjamin, I guess. Then this fellow Monardo [George D. Monardo], he changed the name to the Ralph K. Davies Medical Center. (They had wanted to call the International Building the Davies Building, but Ralph didn't have that much egotism to do that. The same way with the hospital.) Because he went around and got all this money: he got it from the government, he got it from Buck down here, who was another one who "couldn't give." (Some people just can't give, can they?)

Riess: Was Ralph the major donor?

Davies: No, I think the government was. He did give five million, I guess, or something. He got the money. That's the principal thing. That's why Monardo wanted to call it the Ralph K. Davies Medical Center, but they didn't until after he died.

Riess: Was Ralph on any other boards? Symphony, arts, other institutions?

Davies: Oh, he was on the Chamber of Commerce [director, California Chamber of Commerce, 1935-1941].

Riess: What does "director, St. Mary's Square, 1961" mean?

Davies: He had a lot to do with that, because that's where the International Building is. Silas Palmer was the president of it. He had to buy a lot of land around there, that I do know. There used to be a Chinese temple that he spent a lot of time buying. I think he for some reason or other helped to put St. Mary's Square together again after they built the building. It was a deal of some kind.

Riess: The hospital was his major philanthropic interest?

Davies: I would say so. He did a number of rather smaller things, but he never talked about them. He wasn't going to boost himself at all.

Riess: Before you committed yourself to the project of the Symphony Hall, you were not involved in the Symphony or the Opera or a board member?

Davies: No. I always went. I am very musical. Musically inclined. I enjoy it. But I didn't support them. I just went. I wasn't on anything. I didn't get into this giving business until I had money. I didn't have any money. I did go to the Symphony and Opera. I had a box. Ralph rarely went. This is the same story with Gwin Follis; he said he wasn't interested, but now he says he wouldn't miss them. Poor dear isn't very well. I must call him. They gave him a huge party. After Mr. Brayton Wilbur died—who was a great philanthropist and he kept it going for years, I've heard—then it was Gwin who came on and got other companies interested. It's the big companies that give the big money.

Riess: You are also a trustee of the University of San Francisco, and on the boards of the Exploratorium and of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Davies: Oh, yes. I get about four or five calls each day, practically, asking me to go on boards, or give something.

Riess: How do you decide what interests you?

Davies: This is something that I have thought about. Ralph really, in a way, he told me. He said, "Look, you're going to have an awful lot of people ask you for money." He had just been through it himself, I guess. "My idea is if you get interested in something, do it well, do something you can be proud of. And forget the rest, because you can't do them all well." It has been kind of a guideline. I'm interested in education and music.

Last night I listened to that abortion thing on television and I couldn't look at it, it was so awful! There are so many wonderful causes, aren't there? But you can't do them all. So I'm going to always just think of education and music. The Woodside Priory

School came just yesterday. They want me to start an endowment fund for them. I've been interested in that ever since its been there. I think I was the first one they came to. But I've never--oh, I've given them three or four thousand maybe every couple of years--but what they really want is an endowment. Well, I'll think about it. I don't know.

Riess: Do your daughters advise you at all?

Davies: No, I just talk with Phil Hudner and Don Crawford. They come down about every six weeks, and Phil said this morning, "Well, we better come down." I said, "Don't ask me now, because I don't want to make a date. But pretty soon." They are very good, both of them, and they really get along, they really agree.

Western Art, and the Ranch

Davies: Ralph was really an extraordinary man, when you think of it. He bought twenty years ago, or more, some fifty Remingtons and Russells. [Charles Russell, painter, and Frederic Remington, sculptor, of western subjects] And he bought them for five or six thousand. He had a broad interest. They're now at the International Building, and they're not shown, and I wanted to give them to the de Young. I talked about it with Ian White--we meet each other. He wanted me to build a "western wing," to house them. I said, "No, thank you, I'm not going to. But if I give them to you, you have to have them permanently exhibited, because I get many invitations to give them other places," as you might know.

Anyway, right now we're going to loan them to Monterey for about two years. Maybe by that time somebody will build a western wing at the de Young, which would cost three or four hundred thousand, to add on something.

This was another thing that Ralph did that was kind of interesting.

Riess: Who started him on that interest?

Davies: During the war when he was going East they would stop at Ogden, Utah, and Ogden was a great place for Indian artifacts. That's where most of it came from. Then when he was in Washington he was a great friend of John Collier, who was the commissioner for Indian Affairs, and he got a lot that came through that. They liked each other evidently, and Ralph went with Collier many times.



Diamond D Ranch, Lake County, California



Ralph K. Davies, Diamond D Ranch



Ralph K. Davies, Diamond D Ranch

Riess: And he bought the cigar store Indian for your Tahoe house.

Davies: Yes. That was a wonderful story. I wonder where it came from.

The thing is that he did do these things. Who would know, when he bought them, that now they're going to be worth two and three hundred thousand. He didn't know either, but he had some instinct for buying them. He liked them! He bought some art that I have here through Herbert Hoover--no relation to President Hoover. Herbert Hoover is the one who discovered Harold Davies, Ralph's brother.

Riess: I guess he liked the western thing.

Davies: Oh, yes. He liked the idea. But he wasn't really "western" at all. He couldn't have been more un-western at all. You see, his mother was Irish, and those things, that kind of culture, goes on down.

Riess: But the cowboy, the ranch, that idea?

Davies: That he liked. I have pictures of him in his boots and his cowboy hats. And he raised quarter horses. He raised all kinds of animals up there. None of them—it was more expense than anything else. We sold the ranch right after his death. It was in his will. He said, "Get rid of the ranch. It's too expensive for anybody to have." So we did.

Riess: It wasn't a working ranch. He couldn't raise cattle there?

Davies: He did, he did, but at a great loss. He raised Black Angus cattle. He got Black Angus from Scotland, and tried that. We used to have Angus steaks all the time. I never heard of such thick things. But it didn't work out. Finally he went into the horses, quarter horses. That didn't work out either.

Riess: Hard to believe he couldn't make it work out.

Davies: Well, he really wasn't there. My people were ranchers, and if you're a rancher you run your ranch. He hired a man to run it, which cost I don't know how much. Umpteen amounts. He hired all these cowboys to train the horses. Very expensive. I came from the small town of Quincy and there they did all their own work, except at haying time when you got many Indians in to do the haying. Ralph only went up there once a month or every six weeks or something. It was just a fabulous folly. Couldn't have been worse. It was the first thing he said in his will. But he enjoyed it. A lot of men do. They go out and buy ranches, makes them feel something—to own land. That comes from the Irish, I think. They like to own land.

Riess: And the rough and ready image.

Davies: He was the opposite of that, I must say. But he did like it, and he loved riding. There's a beautiful picture upstairs. He just adored the picture. He had this wonderful stallion, that would kill most people, but he rode the horse very, very well. If he wanted to master something, he really worked hard at it!

Riess: He had ridden as a young boy?

Davies: Yes, he had a pony. Maybe that's where it started. That pony was his greatest treasure. He bought and paid for it. It was just a pony, but he always loved it. He would ride it. And he had dogs. That's why we always had dogs. He really loved animals.

Riess: Did you all go, when he went to the ranch?

Davies: No, I went up very little. He would go up. It was his baby, in a way. Anshen and Allen built it, a beautiful house up there, near Middletown. And it always hurt me in a way that Ralph also furnished it with the most wonderful Indian things. When it came to me to sell, I sold it with all that in there. I sold it for \$1.5 million, with the furnishings. The man who bought it, Peterson, who made a lot of money in harvester machinery--they say he used to own all of Lafayette--they told me that he put it all in the closet and kept it there. Then somebody finally got it out and gave it to a museum, because it was all museum quality. Beautiful things. Maryon took a few things. I have some in here now, but I should have a lot more. One was by a Western artist. Anyway, he had many of them up there. But the sale was "and contents," and I didn't know what "and contents" meant, except the furniture, which was all hand-made, I might say, by Anshen and Allen.

VI LOUISE DAVIES' OWN INTERESTS

Daughters' Education, Debuts

Davies: I believe in the really grounded education. The Catholics do stress the cultural side more than the public schools do now.

Riess: How did you decide about your own daughters' education?

Davies: They did go to Sacred Heart for a year. When they went to Sacred Heart I would have to take them and go and get them at three o'clock. At that time I was going to the Symphony, or something. Some of their other friends were going to Castilleja, and Ralph kind of liked that. Sacred Heart was four or five miles away, in Atherton, and I had to take them and pick them up; Castilleja had a bus. Isn't that awful? That's why they went there.

Ellen graduated from Spence, in New York. All our neighbors' children here were going back East to high school. It was the thing to do. And they wanted to go. It was Hortense Fitzgerald who went to Spence, which is a very high grade finishing school. Still is, I guess. So the girls went to Castilleja grammar school, and then they went to high school, all of them did, back East. Alice graduated from Chatham. Maryon went for two or three years to that very swell school in Washington, Madeira, but she came back and graduated from Castilleja. It was my fault in a way to put them in Castilleja all those years. I should have kept them at Sacred Heart.

Riess: So you didn't have your daughters with you for a few years there.

Davies: It seems to me I was kind of busy then, somehow or other, though I didn't belong to boards and things.

Riess: Were you a hostess for the visiting firemen?

Davies: No. We could have done more, but Ralph was also traveling a lot.

Riess: Then your girls went on to college?

Davies: Alice graduated from Sarah Lawrence. Maryon--she got into Stanford and they accepted her, and then about a week later they said no, she needed another credit. She was so mad. Ellen graduated from here, from Berkeley.

Riess: Whose children were you visiting last week?

Davies: They were Ellen's. Deborah, who has a job--she's very like her father--and Tock [R. Stockton Rush III]. As Deborah describes him, she said, "Nana, he has the ability to concentrate like I've never known before." He is a jet pilot. He started flying when he was sixteen. He'll graduate next year from Princeton.

Of course, Ralph had that ability too. And the Rush family have done awfully well. Tock's great great-grandfather, Benjamin Rush, started Princeton. These are people who have accomplished a lot. His father's grandfather was the president of United States Steel. And they signed the Declaration of Independence. I had to laugh. We went into one of these rooms at Princeton, which was founded in 17-something, and there were his ancestors on the wall, three of them I think.

Tock is ambitious. And he's crazy about girls. He's had a girl since he was eight! Cappy, my other granddaughter, said, "That boy, he's into the stock market right now." He's supposed to go straight to the Navy, but he's wavering a little bit now. His father was in the Marines. I wish he would go in the Navy. But he really is interested in that stock market now.

Riess: Tell me about your daughters' coming out parties.

Davies: Maryon came out when she was seventeen, which was much too early. Maryon is a very social person, more than any of them. She loves to go to parties, and loves to give parties. It's a way of life for her. And we certainly did give parties.

Riess: Seventeen is early?

Davies: Eighteen is traditional. Eighteen or nineteen.

But the party that people will never forget was Alice's, and it was on the American President Lines Wilson, and it was the most glamorous thing. It was really a way out thing. Cost an awful lot of money. We had to keep the boat going--it cost about \$10,000 just to keep the ship going. Well, it was crazy! But I only learned about how expensive it was later. [laughs]

Riess: Where was Maryon's party?

Davies: It was here, and we had a huge party, too many people!

Riess: And for Ellen?

Davies: I can't remember. Hmm. Ellen wouldn't like that!

Riess: And the flowers by Mabel Ah Sam?

Davies: Oh, Mabel did all the flowers. We probably put Mabel in business. Right now everybody invites her to their parties. At that time she was just a florist. Now she goes up to the Metcalf's and spends a week. Mind you, I like her very much. She's very down to earth. She'd be the first one to tell you she came from nothing. Her cousin is my gardener, so I really know her pretty well. Now she does everything. She did that big wedding that was at Bob Hope's place in Palm Springs last week. [Mabel Ah Sam died in 1986]

Nursing, and Mothering

Davies: Are there more volunteers now than ever? I hear of people all the time. My next door neighbor says, "They couldn't pay me for what I do." I hear this on all sides.

Riess: I was just looking at the oral history with Robert Koshland. His wife I think spent four days a week transcribing books for the blind.

Davies: Yes, I know many people who have done that.

You didn't do the oral history with Bob, did you? He sits next to me at the Symphony. He's ninety on April 30th. They kind of thought I'd give him a party. He's asked me to lunch, and he's introduced me to the Peninsula-something Foundation [San Mateo Foundation]. It's like the San Francisco Foundation. The man who's the head of it came down and talked to me for hours the other day, Mr. Bill Somerville. They have given \$10,000 to Alviso, to help those people out over there. [Town of Alviso suffered extensive

flood damage in 1982-83 winter rains.] He told me that the people are not poor, but they need help. I asked him how they select when to give it, and he talked about that.

Koshland was one of the originators of that foundation. It used to be called something else. I went down there once to see it. Bob wanted me to come. He's a darling man. Not at all well. You know, every one of those Jewish people are related. We'll talk and he'll say, "Oh, that's my second cousin." They don't always get along, let me tell you. I found out a lot about them. But this fellow, he's just as nice as he can be. I don't know much about him. His sister is Mrs. Louis [Margaret] Sloss, who I know, and her daughter is Mrs. William [Peggy] Lowe.

It is interesting. When I came into the [Woodside-Atherton] Garden Club we had many Jewish people around here, but they were never invited to the Garden Club. They were never invited to the Francisca Club. Now they are. Not all of them, but Peggy Lowe is a member. This is mostly true of San Francisco Jews, though. I know Janet Fleishhacker very well, and I went to Morty's funeral, her husband, and I went with Elsa Weill, who used to live over here--she's gone to heaven now--and I remember she said, "This is the second time I've been here." [to temple] "Elsa!" "Yes, I was baptized here, and now I'm here for Morty's funeral." And she was even a relative! But they didn't get along--that's what I found out about that.

Our Jews, they couldn't be nicer, they couldn't be better. They're into everything.

Riess: The volunteer spirit, of course, is not new.

Davies: Hortense Fitzgerald came from this New York family, and I said to her once, because she volunteers four days a week, or five--her husband's gone, but she did a little bit of it before, but now she does a great deal of it--I said, "Was it that way with your mother?" She said, "Yes." They were very great Catholics, and they used to help the Helpers of the Holy Soul, or something. But she said, "I do think it's getting more so."

Riess: Did you volunteer? Hospital work or anything?

Davies: Yes--[laughs] I forgot about that. I was a nurse. It was kind of fun, and I learned a lot. That must have been about 1940. It was here, anyway. I was a nurse's aide. I worked for her three days a week and I learned a lot about what it means to be a nurse. It was quite different then than it is now. Nurses have advanced a lot since 1940.

That's really the only thing I did, except I belonged to the Garden Club and I was president one year. That isn't philanthropy, and the other isn't either, but it was something that was necessary to do.

Riess: It was during the war years?

Davies: Yes. For five years.

As I told them at one time, I was a frustrated nurse anyway. I told my mother I thought I'd like to go and train to be a nurse when I got out of high school. At that time, in 1918, nurses didn't do nursing. They did all kinds of things. They scrubbed floors. She said, "I don't think that that's for you to do." But I thought it would be kind of fun to be a nurse.

Riess: Why didn't she think that was for you to do?

Davies: I don't know. I guess she thought it was too hard work. But I didn't do it. I did register, I got all registered, and then came home and told her. I guess I'm very independent. But she said, "I don't think you ought to do that." She told me it isn't just all this being nice to people and helping people. I guess I always felt like she was that kind of person, entirely. She was always helping people. That's where I got the instinct, I guess. Unless it's in everyone.

I wonder now if they accepted me. I've forgotten what hospital it was. I registered and I got it all fixed up, and then I didn't go. I knew she was against it, but I don't think that would have deterred me. I think I would have said, "I think I'll do it anyway." But I didn't go. I don't quite know why, now. Anyway, I had the skill of being a stenographer, so I probably got a job.

Riess: Did you feel very useful as a nurse's aide?

Davies: Yes, in several categories I would say. Mostly I gave baths. Did I tell you about that?

The first ward I went into, there was a man who had fallen off a high ladder, and he had a broken hip or broken leg or something. Of course I was as nervous as I could be giving a man a bath for the first time. When I got through he said, "Well, lady, that was the nicest bath I had this morning." "What do you mean?" "Well, some other lady like you came in here about an hour or so ago and gave me a bath." [laughter] I always love that story. They didn't tell me that that wasn't the ward that I was supposed to be in.

But I learned, I found out, the doctor told me because I followed him around to his patients and he said, "Look here, gal," when I began to get green. "Go out in the hall and put your head down." I was going to be sick. After that, they gave me the children's ward, which was better for me.

It was an experience. I wish I'd had this before I had children. I worried when the children got sick. If I'd known what to do I wouldn't have worried so. I think you ought to have a lot more skills than you do when you become a wife and mother is what I'm saying. They ought to have schools for wives. Schools for taking care of people. So much of being a mother is putting them to bed and taking their temperature, and knowing when and what.

A wife and mother--. It always appalled me. We learn to cook, or to sew, or we learn to work in an office. We get a degree in art. But who ever gives you a degree on how to be a wife and mother, and it's really your biggest job, isn't it? I wonder why there isn't something.

Now in the Catholic Church they have this: you go to some kind of meeting and you talk about being married. Everybody comes out and talks about it. Several times I've heard that a couple has decided to postpone getting married until they got to know about each other a little more. I would think it might call off a lot of marriages. I don't know about you and your husband, but--oh, I know it wouldn't have deterred me. I was determined to get married to him. But I think there should be some more preparation for marriage, and motherhood.

Riess: Of course in all the garden clubs and whatnot meetings, women do have an opportunity to compare notes, and so on.

Davies: I went to a tea party the other day, and we talked and gossiped, and I said, "You know, I haven't been to a tea party like this for a hundred years." We used to do it, and it was good for us, but I hadn't been to a tea party like that for ten years. Now it's cocktails, but not a tea party with just women, neighbors.

Riess: When you were a young bride, you didn't have such get-togethers?

Davies: Oh, no, we moved to Ross, where I didn't know a soul.

We were entertained by all the people in Ross. Do you know anything about Ross? It's like Berkeley, probably, in the beginning. Families that have lived there for many, many years. They were very nice and invited us, but I really didn't have any friends. In fact, I didn't have any married friends, come to think of it. That's an exaggeration, but any close married friends. And

I didn't know how to cook, I didn't know anything about it. I had worked, and my mother loved to cook and sew, and in fact she made every stitch I owned until we got married. I was pretty isolated in Ross. My old friends were in Oakland, and they weren't married. Well, one was married, but it was in a completely different category. There were good friends in Oakland, the Fred Paynes, and the Elwood Starbucks.

Riess: In this instance was there a way the church could be helpful to you?

Davies: Yes. I don't think I could have lived through all my married life, or any life, if I hadn't really believed in prayer, and believed that I had a feeling that I was being helped, that I was not alone. It's that feeling of being lonely, maybe, but not alone.

Riess: You can speak to your confessor about your marriage?

Davies: Oh yes, and I did. I remember once I said, "He doesn't listen to me." The priest, Father Cavanaugh, said, "Why don't you be diplomatic? Try another angle." Some of them are very skilled counselors; some of them are less so. Now they have marriage counselors. Seems remarkable, because the priests aren't married, but they do come from a family, and they get a lot of education. Many people go to priests and say, "This is happening now," and they do have knowledge. This priest said, "Maybe you're too quick to come out with things. Maybe you should kind of work around it." Women have always done this, more or less, being clever with their husbands, trying to get them to do what they want them to do. But you can't be very direct about it, can you? People have a normal resistance to being told anything. Children too.

Independence

Davies: Let me finish what I was saying about Mrs. Roth [off tape]. I was going to tell her, when we were at a luncheon the other day, that I first saw her when we were first married and we lived in Oakland, and she used to ride sidesaddle. Then they had all those horses. She really is an absolute wonder. I like her. My encounters have been rather brief over the years. [Lurline Matson Roth died September 4, 1985.]

Riess: Have you worked on any things together?

Davies: No. She'd be boss, I'm sure. Very much so. She has tremendous force.

I also remember that we all went out to a very private auction at Filoli after Bourn died. That really was something. Only a few people. That big Jacobean table comes from that. Bourn was Billy Vincent's uncle, and when he died he left no heirs, and I think he left it to Billy Vincent. He sold it to Roth, is my understanding. But at that auction--the saddest part was they didn't have any children. Evidently everybody was giving them presents, presents, presents. Everything had inscribed on it someplace, "From so-and-so." It was sort of sad. This beautiful Irish silver, all given to them.

Riess: Do you think there are any other great homes on the peninsula that even compare to Filoli?

Davies: No. The other one was, and of course it was much earlier, the Phelan house, which was given to the county, Montalvo. Now people who are writing or something, they can go there for six months or something, free.

You know, you have made me think about some things. I really don't want to think back too much, because I really don't want to dwell on the past, as many old people do. But a lot of things happened, as I think about it, not momentous, but the people--.

Alice has said, "Now, Mother, all our life all we ever heard about was Daddy." It was always his life, not my life. And he was the one who really did kind of a miracle thing. I'm just reading a book about Louis Mayer, of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, written by his daughter. Lucy gave it to me. It's just awfully written, but people will read it. It tells about how her father was such a driver, and the mother was way in the background. This happens, I think. You both can't be in the foreground. This [Mayer] daughter adored her father, and these children adored Ralph. It's only now that my grandson Ralph said to me, "You know, Nana, I used to think that I was going to be a duplicate of Grandy. Now I realize that I'm another person. But it's taken me a long while to do it." [laughs]

Riess: You said his mother emphasized how he must succeed. Did he expect some kind of success from his daughters?

Davies: No, he didn't. All he wanted to do was to do for them, and he spoiled them entirely, except in a very few things. For instance, he wouldn't give them a car, because he didn't believe in that! He indulged them in every way.

I guess the Irish families--. Our family was closer; I mean we talked, we yelled at each other. They didn't, and it was not a very happy family at all! I mean to say that it is too bad, and I guess maybe history has shown that, that people that come up from nothing are apt to do this to their children; they want to give them something they didn't have. And that is just the wrongest thing. Because what made them? Necessity.

As I get older, and it's not that I'm so grownup, I see that so many people are really juvenile in their emotions. Thinking they can just be something, or someone. I never thought I could be anybody. Oh, I was impressed by people, but I was myself.

Riess: Much the best.

Davies: I've accepted my limitations. I'm a little surprised that what I have done is acknowledgeable. It just amazes me. That TV thing going on now that took eight hours here, and ten people to produce, and it takes one minute to see, and it has been going for at least a month, and everywhere I go they say, "I saw you on TV and you were wonderful!" I didn't think it was good at all, but this one minute had a sincerity about it. It was just a moment, really.

Riess: Well, you are very sincere.

Davies: I can't be otherwise. You see, I have no front. Well, hardly any! [laughs] I guess that's like Mrs. Roth, too; she just comes right out and says things. I think you're born that way, I don't think it's cultivated.

Riess: The fronts are cultivated.

Davies: I've done an awful lot of inward thinking in my life.

Riess: When you were in social situations with Ralph, you were "the good wife."

Davies: Oh, I didn't do anything. I sensed that it wouldn't have been good for him. I didn't want to anyway. Let's be honest. I didn't want to. But he never could have stood it.

Riess: If you were very independent.

Davies: One time I did. It was some big dinner I was giving. He said, "Sure, go ahead, I just won't be there, that's all." I did give it. It was a rather important dinner, for Bernard DeVoto. I was connected with Stanford, and he was there and they asked me to give that dinner. Well, Ralph didn't appear, and that hurt me. On the other hand, I realized that I was the one giving it, and not he, and he just didn't want to be in on it.

That shows that actually underneath he wasn't quite so sure of himself, was he?

Riess: You have always been much more comfortable socially, probably.

Davies: That's right, entirely, and he was not. It bothered him. He wasn't brought up at all that way. My background, the farmer background--people that are farmers are quite themselves. I've been analyzing it. You know, they had nobody to kowtow to, so they were just naturally what they were. The only front that I had is that at one point I really wanted to be a great actress.

Riess: Did you find yourself doing many such dinners at Stanford?

Davies: I knew Wally Sterling very well, and because we lived there I met all those people, they were always inviting me to these things. In fact, I was on the board for the fiftieth anniversary. Why, I don't know. But I knew the presidents. It was kind of fun for me.

Ellie Heller told me the other day that she will never forget that dinner. It was a big dinner for me, an awful lot of people, about fifty or seventy.

Riess: Where did you give it?

Davies: Right here, and Ralph didn't come. He had a convenient "someplace to go," but I knew it was because I was in charge, not he. So I tried never to do that again, because there's no use making him unhappy about it.

They were having a big symposium at Stanford, that was the reason, and Wally Stegner wrote a book about Bernard DeVoto. There were people from all over the United States here. And Agnes somebody, a biographer. This was the dinner after the symposium, or before the big night, or something.

Ralph really would have liked that if it had been his. He really did so many things, he had far more courage than I ever had about doing things. When he was in this American Petroleum thing, it was a very strange story, that's never quite been told, about

this man who was the head of Phillips Petroleum, at one time he was a barber and he had his barber chair enthroned in gold. Well, Ralph became a great friend of the sultan of Kuwait, and he told him where these oil fields were because he liked this man who was the barber from Oklahoma. He said, "Now, if you know any friends--I don't want to give it to Standard or to Shell, I want somebody maybe you know." Ralph inspired loyalty, and we got thousands of letters when he died from people he had helped in all kinds of ways. This Kuwait thing did prove a great thing.

Opera and Symphony Openings

Riess: You've just survived the Symphony and Opera openings. How would you compare them?

Davies: Compare them? [laughs] They're hardly comparable. This last one, really, you have the greatest admiration and respect for that [Placido] Domingo. [Dominigo filled in for the San Francisco Opera opening.] He's a great actor. [Luciano] Pavarotti stands and sings, but he doesn't act. This fellow really is a great actor.

Riess: When did you first hear that you were going to have the substitution?

Davies: Three o'clock, I think. I came in from some place and the phone rang and they didn't tell me what happened or anything, just that "it's been postponed until nine o'clock, but your dinner now will be at seven instead of nine." That was the dinner afterwards.

We got there rather late. When I heard it was nine o'clock, I didn't want to stand around, so I planned to get there about six-thirty. Actually it was seven-thirty, because we got into the tunnel and there was an accident. But it was all right, because dinner wasn't until nine-thirty, I guess. [laughter] There were many dinners. There was one at the Museum and one at the Wattis Room, and I went to the City Hall. I think that was put on by the Opera. It must have been.

Then the opening of the Symphony couldn't have been more glorious. You wouldn't imagine they could do it again, would you, but they did. It was absolutely thrilling. And Edo [DeWaart] couldn't have been more thrilling. He came down to see me. (The reason is I have given an endowment to the Symphony. Now everybody wants an endowment.)

Edo really threw himself into those things. It was all American, you know. Well, the whole opening was really a great experience, and everybody entered into it. At the end everybody said, "Aren't the balloons coming?" and at the last minute the balloons all came, red, white, and blue. Then they danced. We didn't dance afterwards on the stage, but many people did. It really was a great evening.

Riess: Was it one of Charlotte Mailliard's productions?

Davies: She did the balloons, sure. But they've done this every time now. This was the fourth time, I think.

Riess: It's a tremendous amount of detail work, women on committees.

Davies: Yes. And they all do it for love. It's a great deal of work, because first there's the dinner. There were about ten of us that are all connected with it, so we all sit at one table, Mrs. [Brayton] Wilbur's. Over here was a great big table with her son, who's the president, Brayton, Jr. Then they had the Gettys. I'll tell you about them in a minute. And then they had Mailliard, and then they had the mayor and her husband. Who else? I said to Brayton, "I bet you invited the mayor." And he said, "Of course we did." And Herb Caen, because part of the Symphony Notes was one that he had written way back sometime about [Henry Kimball] Hadley, who wrote the "San Francisco Suite." Have you ever heard it? It's been around a little bit. But it's kind of thrilling.

I think the whole table was one that Brayton gave. In the middle of it was Mrs. Getty, who drips with diamonds; she had earrings about that long. And they were all suddenly on the floor. It was in the papers. It was right next to us. They were all scrambling. She'd lost one earring, so they were all down on the floor. They found it.

Riess: Which is the dressier event, the Opera or the Symphony?

Davies: The Opera used to be, but now it's the Symphony. They even spoke about it. The men wear full dress at the Opera, and they didn't at the Symphony. But the clothes were much more elaborate. Years ago for the Opera people wore white tie and tails. Well, now I think maybe there was about two dozen, but no more. Things shift and change all the time.

This is kind of interesting. When we got to the City Hall--really the City Hall was beautiful, they had a bell in little lights, so big, it must have a drop of about fifty feet, you can't believe it. Anyway, we were late. We didn't get there for any of the drinks. They sent us to a table, and when we got to the table

it was all taken. I said, "It doesn't matter where we sit. Just any old place." So we went to a table that had four seats vacant, and they were all young people, very young, in their thirties. They said they came from Silicon Valley down here. The wives were all dressed up, and the men were very smart looking. The girls all belonged to the Junior League, so they got their husbands to take this table and go to this opening. They could well afford it. They're all very well off. But we had the best time.

Afterwards Brayton said, "Where were you? We looked all over for you." And I said, "Our seats were taken at that table, so we just sat down over here. We had more fun." I couldn't get over all these young people. I said, "Who organized this?" The wives said, "We did." They all know each other a little bit.

Riess: Whom did you sit with at the opera table?

Davies: Dita Wilbur, Brayton's mother, and Mrs. Anna May Logan. Anna Logan Upton. For forty years she has been the one woman in San Francisco who has kept all this together, the Symphony and the Ballet and the Opera. In a quiet way she was the most prominent woman in San Francisco. She started the Black and White Ball. She's the one who organized it all, she worked her head off for all of it, for years and years. Then John and Lolita Renshaw were at the table. We've known them forever. She's been his wife for about six years, she's on all the boards, she's awfully nice.

The other night, after the Symphony, there was dancing on the stage, but we went down to the Wattis Room and they had an elegant after-thing. They served white wine to everybody in the whole place after the performance was over. I don't know who supplied it, somebody probably gave it. But they passed white wine to everybody.

There were many people in the Wattis Room, so I think people wandered in whether they belonged or not, and they served champagne. Maybe not the best--I don't know--but it was good. Then they had those great big strawberries with chocolate on, and hors d'oeuvres. This is Narsai [David]. He does the catering for the Wattis Room.

The St. Francis put on the dinner. It was really--except I couldn't eat it. They had filet mignon that thick! I really don't like meat any more, do you? We had a tent put up by Neiman-Marcus. They do that every year. In the vacant lot just before you get

there. Neiman-Marcus put that on, and the decorations were so gorgeous. They had red and white and blue tablecloths, a kind of synthetic. It wasn't silk, but it wasn't cotton either. And they had two kinds of elegant wine. It was expensive, a hundred and fifty dollars.

Riess: Seems like after all these years now everyone is behind Edo DeWaart.

Davies: You know he's going out? I didn't say anything about it the other day, because he was nice enough to come down. I know him fairly well. I've known him since he came. He's a cute little Dutch boy. I didn't say anything about this, but I said, "They're having an awful hard time replacing you." And he said, "Look, I'm going to be here for two more years." (He doesn't leave until 1985.) In a way I'm just wondering if he'll ever change his mind.

Good conductors are very difficult to find. I mean good, well-known ones. Maybe they're good and coming up. But that's what we want, that's what they're looking for. There's only about a dozen in the whole world, and they're very difficult to get. They did try to get one, from Leipzig or something, but he wouldn't do it because he said he had a commitment. [Herbert Blomstedt was chosen.]

They say that these conductors like the one in San Jose, Mr. Cleve--he's very good, but he's stuck in that position, he'll be there all his life. They used to have a school at Juilliard for conductors, but it isn't so good right now, or something. Of course Rostropovich, who conducts the National Symphony in Washington, is a cellist. And Pinchas Zuckerman has conducted and he's a violinist.

Edo was an oboe player. He was telling about it the other day. I was talking about churches or religion or something and he said, "I don't belong to any church. But," he said, "I believe in a superior being." He said, "You know, when I was young I played an oboe in all the churches in Amsterdam. No matter what they were."

The one that I think is great is [Zubin] Mehta. That man, not only does he evidently have a good reputation as a conductor, but he has a wonderful personality. I did meet him a couple of times, and he has a wonderful personality. I mean, he's the kind that makes people like you. He's outgoing. He likes people evidently.

Riess: That would be important here because San Francisco is a very social city.

Davies: Oh, I think so. It must be, because here we have all those people going to the first night. And what I liked about sitting with all

those young people, I said, "Do you have seats? Do you go to the Symphony?" Yes, they do. They go to the Opera. They go everywhere. That's what's coming up. They're only in their thirties, maybe their late thirties. They all looked younger than springtime to me. But that's what's coming up. They can afford it. But isn't it wonderful that they're going!

Cystic Fibrosis Benefit Fashion Show

Davies: Four of the younger group at the table said they were coming here on Thursday when we're having a fundraiser for cystic fibrosis. I went to the biggest dinner last night. Jan Yanehiro gave the dinner for all the people that are connected with cystic fibrosis. She does all this for love, besides all her "Evening Magazine" thing.

Cystic fibrosis is only a children's disease. Did you know that? The doctor at the Children's Hospital sat at the table where I was, and I said, "What is the average age?" He said, "They hardly ever live over twenty." He talked about one girl that was twenty-three, and just before she died she went on television or did something or other for it. That's about as long as they ever live. They haven't really found any cure. It's something you inherit, and they don't know if they have it. And they look perfectly fine all through it. They're going to have some of those children here for the fundraiser that have it.

Riess: So you went to the dinner for that?

Davies: Yes. The woman who sat next to me has a French children's boutique down here in Menlo Park. Only children's clothes. We are having thirty-five little children parade with her things. She made clothes for Princess Diana.

I said, "My goodness." She made, I think, the baby's baptismal thing. Somebody gave it to Diana as a present. I couldn't get over all that. She'd been working night and day and she's doing it all for free.

All the children that have it are down here at the Children's Hospital, so the head of the Children's Hospital was there. (They came here about three weeks ago, all the ladies, to find out how they're going to put the chairs and the traffic and all that.) Sitting on the other side of me at the dinner--this is most amazing--was this young lady. She looked so young, but she has girls sixteen and seventeen. Her husband is the editor of Sunset magazine, he is the whole thing. I had met her before. She didn't

tell me her husband was the head of it. The daughters had been sewing for the woman who has the boutique. The mother is helping too, but she was getting paid. I just couldn't get over that.

They're going to show a fur coat for a little girl. It's ten thousand dollars. And I said, "How old is the little girl?" About five or six! She says the Arabs come in with their nurses and they order all these clothes, from top to bottom. She said you can't imagine what they pay! They live right down here. Oh, boy, I couldn't get over it.

Riess: Who asked you to have it in your garden?

Davies: Jan. I know Jan very well by now. She's done several things here. And she does this all for love. I said, "Jan!" She said, "Well, I have the time, and it's a good cause. What else could I do? What better could I do?" Another miracle is Mrs. Field's Cookies. You must have heard of them.

Riess: Oh, I've eaten them, of course.

Davies: Seventy-five cents for this!

Riess: They're exceptional.

Davies: They must be at that price. I've never had one.

She couldn't come last night, she's pregnant. But she's supplying the box lunch. She's twenty-six, and she not only has the cookies that are so well-known, but she has several other kinds. Of course they'll be given out. This is the dessert that they'll have. She will be here, they said. She started this business and they were so good that now she's all over the country. It's a million-dollar organization.

Riess: I wonder what Mr. Field does.

Davies: He helps her. He quit his job. [laughter] I said, "How is he?" He didn't come either. But he evidently distributes all this. It's a million-dollar thing, they say. I don't think it's been going very long, has it? I heard of it about a year ago maybe.

But what Jan did, and I'm finding out that other people do this, and it never occurred to me--well, if I had to do it I might have thought of it--is she called up Herb [Caen] and said, "I have a present for you. When can I bring it?" I know Herb quite well. At least my daughter knows him very well, which means I know him, too. She took these cookies, two dozen of them, up to the Chronicle, and she told all about the fundraiser--because everybody reads Herb

Caen. Did you see it? It was about three days ago. She told about how it was being done down here and so forth. So he put it in his column.

Mrs. Santa Claus

Davies: I'm also going to be involved in a thing at Neiman-Marcus on November 21. It's for the Little Sisters of the Poor out there on Lake Street. Do you know anything about that?

Riess: No.

Davies: Now, you see, you need educating. This lady, her name is Yvonne Sangiacomo. The husband is in real estate. He buys buildings and makes them into condominiums. She couldn't be nicer. I just met her by chance at a meeting. She sat next to me and she got me interested in this thing. The way she got Neiman-Marcus is what Jan did. She took food, and she's been giving me food, special canned food, boxes, baskets.

I said, "Please, I don't need this!" She said, "That's how I got Neiman-Marcus to give us this place." She got it about six months ago. It's not easy to get Neiman-Marcus to give you a whole evening, the whole store.

Riess: She got it by taking food?

Davies: Yes, to the publicity woman at Neiman-Marcus, whom I know vaguely. I guess I'm going to get to know her a little better now. It's all approved from Dallas; but she's the one here. But Yvonne Sangiacomo had been working on her over six months, she said. She cultivated her.

Riess: It's interesting to find how these things work. She's got a cause, and she's willing to put six months into it.

Davies: She has already put that into it. On the twenty-seventh she's going to have all the press at Neiman-Marcus. She's going to tell them what we're doing. She expects to make three hundred thousand, and I guess she will. It'll be a hundred and fifty dollar per person dinner. And they want to get publicity. This is amazing.

Riess: How many people can Neiman-Marcus hold?

Davies: I've only been on the ground floor. I haven't been upstairs yet. I don't know how they're going to do it, but I'm going to be Mrs.

Santa Claus on the ground floor, and Mr. Terry McEwen of the Opera is going to be Mr. Santa Claus. They're going to have all kinds of things, and dancing on every floor. That I know because they've employed my nephew Jimmy Diamond--he's really Jimmy Blum--to be on one floor. I asked them to do that and she said, "We're going to anyway." What else? Oh, they're going to have all kinds of things.

Riess: If someone knows you and they can through you publicize their event and their cookies, it has interesting possibilities.

Davies: At one time there was a lady--she's still around--who tried to tell people how to get publicity. This was a long time ago.

Riess: She gave a little seminar in how to do it?

Davies: Yes, I guess so. Now everything's television. You really have to get on television. People do read the paper, but not as much as they look at television. Isn't that interesting? I look at the paper. Do you?

Riess: I think that a page in the Chronicle would be about as effective as anything I could think of.

Davies: She'll have it all there. The thing is to get it out, to get it known.

Riess: Do you know Herb Caen well?

Davies: Oh, yes. I just wrote him a letter. I try not to do it too often, because I'm sure everybody does. I'll show you a picture in here, a photograph, the reason I did it. How do I know him so well? Maryon, I guess. We've known him for at least forty years, through Maryon. They're just very good friends. He's gone through a couple of marriages and after this last one, he lived at Maryon's for about six months.

I wrote to him about Michael Collopy. He did a photo of me. In fact maybe you want one. I bought about ten. It's the best one I've ever had taken. The girls come and say, "Mother, I want one." I said, "You better take it, because I'm going to buy some." He needs my support. He's looking for a job, and there are ten thousand photographers, and they're all good. It's entered into a class in which it's art. But the thing he does best is people, I think.

Riess: What will Herb Caen be able to do?

Davies: I wrote to him and I said, "Will you see him for five minutes?" Michael would like to take photographs of prominent people, and then give a show at the firehouse. I said to Herb, "Would you maybe consent to"--because he's had his picture taken ten thousand million times, every day about twice a day--"let him do this, and then find out who would be a good idea to take a picture of, that hadn't been photographed constantly"--like Sam Armacost, who is forty-four, and the president of Bank of America, and all that--who would consent to have his picture taken for this show that I want to give. I said he could have it in the firehouse in April or May, after he gets somebody.

I'll show you the picture. It's like a painting, really, It's off-beat. I knew he was doing it but he said, "Just walk over there, and look someplace." I said, "All right, I'll go off there." He shot about a dozen. It's the best one, because usually if you know somebody's taking your picture you sit up, and you look nice, and you smile, don't you? And it looks false.

He would like to work for the Chronicle, which must have dozens of photographers. His father is a teacher of art, I don't know where it is. He must be a good teacher. This boy does his own work. He has his own darkroom. I said, "What did you major in?" He said he majored in art, what else?

Riess: Did Michael just call you, and say, "I'd like to come and take your photograph"?

Davies: Yes. He did another one of me. There it is, up there on the wall. I said, "Michael, what do you expect to do with it?" He says, "I want to give a show sometime." He did that one several months ago before we cut the tree down.

Riess: Have you chosen to give major support to the Little Sisters of the Poor?

Davies: Yes, I have. In fact, I've given them--being at this point of my life--I have given them fifty thousand.

I've belonged to St. Elizabeth's for about thirty years. It's now changed its sort of thing. It used to be just for unwed mothers. The Fays got me into it about twenty-five years ago. Now we don't have so many unwed mothers. But they take in girls that are disturbed girls, and something else, the ones that keep their babies, they keep them there. Now they're going out for other funding because they're off United Way or something like that.

Elementary Education

Davies: I have finished with that.

Now I'm going into elementary education because that's really important. If you don't get a good start, it's unlikely that you'll move on to higher education. It's something I feel very strongly about. I said to Phil Hudner, "I think I'll do something for the public schools in San Francisco because they really are in a bad way." Even Governor Deukmejian says so, now. Phil said, "No, why don't you look at it this way"--he happens to be a Catholic, a very good one, but not the kind that bristles all over with it, or is very fundamental, and I know that kind too--he said, "Why don't you give it to the ones in the Mission District in San Francisco, to those who are really suffering?" They take in anybody or everybody, and they really do need help. So that's what I'm going to do.

Riess: These are parish schools?

Davies: Yes, in the Mission. I have picked out three. I haven't done it yet, but this is what we are going to do. It won't be a lot, but it will be something, because they have to get lay teachers and that costs more. They need help, because half of them don't pay tuition. Those schools are full of Vietnamese, Blacks, Spanish, everything. That is going to be our new citizen. You don't have to be Catholic to go to those schools, you can be Jewish or Armenian or whatever if they have room. But they have long waiting lists. They get a better education. I only want to go to the poor ones, the ones that are having difficulties. So, that's my next project.

I had a good public education from the first to the eighth grade mainly in Oakland. But then I went to a convent. I told you the story. Therefore I learned about Catholic education. We had not only a very personal education, I mean we had small things, but we did plays. I think that's one of the great educators. Last night, the man who's the head of Sunset, they're all very deeply Catholic, he was telling me that they have a very good organization where they put on plays all the time. They do it at the Woodside Priory [School]. It couldn't be more educational, really. Also, it helps you understand other people so much more, to step into a whole other role.

The Catholic Church in the Community

Riess: From our conversations I gather that many of the most prominent people in San Francisco are Catholic.

Davies: That's true. Anna Logan is a deep Catholic. She goes to mass every single morning, and I've known her for about twenty years. Dita Wilbur goes every single morning. For instance, the couple that I'm taking to the Symphony tomorrow night, he is a Jew, but his wife is a Catholic, one that goes to mass every single morning. Most of the Catholics that I know--oh, I know a lot are not dedicated--but most of them are. The Jews and the Catholics kind of run the place. The Jews have a lot in common with the Catholics. They do marry many of them. Oscar Sutro was married to an Irish Catholic, McCarthy. There is something about the two backgrounds or blood or something. They are somehow similar.

The other day I went to a meeting just by chance--I don't usually go to these meetings--at St. Denis. Hortense Fitzgerald, my great friend, invited me to go. She's getting very involved with St. Denis. They have quite a lot of money, evidently, and they want to enlarge the church. They had two architects come from the East, Atlanta or someplace, and talk to us. There weren't too many people there, about fifty I guess. The architects said that priests are getting scarce--we don't have too many going into the priesthood, we don't have too many going into the sisters, the nunnery. What we're going to need and be really looking for is a community center. We own land there, and what we should be building is a community center for all the people to meet, not just Catholics but for all people.

Our little church, St. Denis, is a charming little church, but it only holds about three hundred people. Yet we seem to have \$100,000 in the bank. It's right over there in Sharon Heights. Sharon Heights is growing and growing. It's full of people. They all live in apartments. He said, "What you should do is build a big community center," for everybody, regardless of, what do they call it? Creed, color, anything.

The priest who is in charge of it, bless his heart, another Irishman, he's darling, but he can't stand controversy. So he left! Now we have a new one, and I think he's going to embrace it.

Riess: The congregation wants it?

Davies: Some of them do, and some of them don't. They're pulling each other apart. The Irishmen don't want it, the other people do want it. I think it's coming, no matter what. It's coming to every church, no matter whether they are Congregationalist, or Methodist, or Catholic

or Hebrew. They're all going to have to join. This is not tomorrow, but it's almost day after tomorrow. It has to happen. We, the Catholics, go down to the Presbyterian church for lectures. They come to our church. Father Munier started it about ten years ago. Every week the pastors and the priests go to the different churches and they talk about their problems, which are all about the same. [laughs]

It will happen. The new priest has been a chaplain for the Army for about twenty years and I'm sure he's going to love it. He's so different from the other priest. The other was a kind of private person, a very holy man but he didn't like controversy. This one will like it, he'll embrace it, he'll think it's great. He's very different. He asks everybody to get up and talk. Nobody does yet. But he says, "You will. After a while you'll talk. You'll get used to me." And maybe we will.

Night Thoughts

Riess: You said you were reading Carl Jung last night?

Davies: I tell you why, I couldn't sleep all night long--well, I exaggerate--but I looked at that awful movie. ["The Trouble with Amelia," a film for television about incest.]

Somebody had sent me, a long time ago, and I just read it yesterday, something about pornography. This is a pornography capital. Did you know that? San Francisco? I guess this thing I read she had given over KQED. Why she sent it to me--she probably would like me to help support it or something. I saw that this film was going to be on television, and I didn't want to look at it, but I said, "I think I'd better, since it's so pronounced around here." It's a horrible thing. I wrote to her after the program--I'm a great writer--and I said, "This is horrendous, I had no idea that it was so prevalent here."

There was a case involving a father and a daughter several years ago, in San Jose I think. The wife had a job at night, so he stayed home with the children, the girl. In that case the woman did take him back and they had another child. That is real charity. But Jung would say it was in the consciousness of all people, because we are, first of all, animals. I can remember as a child having these dreams, not of a person, but of animals or something. It is in our consciousness; it is not alien to a human being. I've just seen a movie, "Never Cry Wolf." Did you know that wolves have only one mate for life?

That program on television was really well done, but horrifying, so I didn't sleep. I kept thinking about it.

Riess: Why is it that Jung was by your bedside?

Davies: Well, Mr. Carleton Smith gave it to me about two years ago. How he came into my life--I went someplace and met him and he said, "Can I come see you?" And so he has come and seen me a lot, and I know a lot about him. He knows everybody in the whole wide world that's worth knowing--I mean way-up-there people. He goes and stays with Anne Morrow Lindbergh in Maine and in Hawaii.

He works for the Hyatt people. Evidently they're terribly rich, and the hotels are just a small part of it. He finds people in some category and gives them a prize. This year he gave it to Mr. Pei [I. M. Pei], who I think is a great architect. It really was a beautiful tribute. Have you seen that building [East Wing, National Gallery] in Washington? The man is a kind of genius, and his acceptance was really a beautiful, wonderful thing. That's what he does for the Hyatt people. He looks around and finds somebody--I think it's all architects. He sends me information on these things; it's all very elaborate, why they get the prize. It's some name, not Pulitzer; it's Pritzker! The Pritzker Prize, and these people give it. They give them a couple of hundred thousand.

Riess: Wasn't Pritzker a developer around here?

Davies: Yes, one of the sons was here and married to a girl. He died at the age of forty in China of a heart attack.

This Mr. Smith doesn't have any money, but he has an extensive expense account that the Pritzker brothers give him so he can call anybody all over the world, anytime. He called me recently and he gave me the name of a doctor that I was to please call and invite, from Switzerland. I did call him, and I will meet him. But these people who pick up the phone from anywhere and call you all over! They call me quite a bit. There is an Egyptian friend that I haven't seen for years and she's called me twice now. And I don't know why! It amuses me. Carleton calls up very important people all over the country! [laughter]

When I met him, he was staying with Mrs. Robert Watt Miller. That's where he stays--unless he stays here. He says, "I'm coming down, could I stay with you?" And I say, "Sure." But at this thing where we first met, I was being given some award and he just said, "I'd like to see you. Could I come down?" This was several years ago. He's one of these open people who has quite a history, and so forth and so on.

Riess: Why did he think you would like to read Jung?

Davies: I don't know. Oh, well, we discuss everything. But I was surprised to see that he translated it. It's Carleton Smith's interview with Jung. This is a conversation with Carleton Smith and Jung.

But this incest thing, I wonder if it is more prevalent now, or is it just because we talk about it? Why is it that all men--this is what the program was saying last night--need to have someone say, "I love you, you're wonderful," every day? But it is true. If you're subtle enough, that's the way to do it, I suppose. But Ralph was quick to see through it.

Protocol of Volunteering, and Fundraising

Riess: Was your mother a feminist? Did you hear about women's issues from her?

Davies: No, not at all. But I belong to all of them, I am interested in all of them. I gave the first five or a thousand dollars to this group now that's pretty big. What do they call it? It's here in Palo Alto. Resource for Women--that was about twenty years ago, and now they own a building and they give all kinds of things. They came to me a long time ago. These were women who had had a wonderful education, graduates of Vassar and all those schools. They'd had good jobs, and then they'd gotten married and they had children. Now the children were going to school and they formed themselves together saying that their education and all they'd learned had no place to go. Some of them didn't need a job financially, but they wanted to use their ability, what they had. And so they formed this group. They wanted to rent a place, and I gave them the rent for a month or a year or something--that's all I did. I thought it was strange they came to me; well, anyway, they did.

This has probably gone overboard now, because men seem to need more nourishment or something than women do. I've just discovered--and somebody's just written a book about it--that women can't help themselves wanting to have a family. It's something that's part of being a woman. You can't help yourself. It isn't something you decide about; it's a feminine thing; animals have it. You just have to find a mate because you have to go on.

Riess: Did you support other women's issues?

Davies: CROW [Stanford University's Center for Research on Women]. Jing [Mrs. Richard W.] Lyman is the head of that. This is kind of

interesting. It is at Stanford, but I guess it's pretty widespread. She spends a lot of time with it. About a year or so ago--and I understand how they get money, they get somebody who's prominent and then they get a fund. This was in honor of Mrs. Herbert Hoover, who I did know at one time, and it was going to be a scholarship or a professorship, or something. Jing's husband, who I know, was there, the president of Stanford, and he asked me for breakfast, not once, but about five times. I said, "Well, Dick, I know you must be going to ask me something or you wouldn't be so persistent." [laughs] Jing wanted me to give a tremendous amount of money, \$20,000, \$50,000, I don't know what. She'd already had it printed that I was the chief supporter!

I said I appreciated the idea that she thought I would support this, but that I support other things that I am more interested in. I gave her maybe \$3000. As it turned out they found out they couldn't find anybody else to support it, so they called me up and said, "What will we do with the money?" I said, "It's up to you."

It was interesting. She went through the presidency; he cooked the breakfast, and we had a nice time. But it was not the way to do it for me. What she should have said is, "Look, we'd like to do this. Are you interested? We'd like you to support it. We'd like you to head it off!" (That's what she wanted me to do.) But instead of that she had it all done and was asking me to comply. You don't do that to people!

Riess: I have heard Charlotte Mailliard talk about how she gets people to do things.

Davies: At the Symphony we make plans, but we wait for Charlotte. Then sometimes she throws all our plans out. She goes around--I've seen her do it--and says, "Look, if you don't like it, tell me!" But what can you do? She's another one like Jing, but she gets away with it. Charlotte treats everybody nicely, but she does say, "This is what I want to do." And she is good. She is as bold as bold can be. My neighbor over here, Kathy Buchanan, she isn't that way at all, she is exactly the opposite. But she's the one who'd say, "Well, we'll wait for what Charlotte is going to say, but if she's not going to, we have a plan."

I'm writing a little story about volunteers. I don't know that it's getting very far, because it's amazing how many people volunteer in every category. This is something I didn't really know.

Riess: How did Charlotte, for instance, get started?

- Davies: She probably came in and said, "I'd like to do something for you," just like Kathy did. She just went down to the Symphony and said, "Here I am, I'd like to do something." And certainly she does.
- Riess: Well, let's talk about the right way to go about all this. After you gave so generously to the Symphony, did you turn around and get involved in raising more money for them?
- Davies: I did a little bit. They asked me to. Now Brayton has asked Maryon to help because she knows the Gettys very well. But she says, "Mother, I couldn't do that!" You don't ask your best friend.
- Riess: But I thought that was just the way it worked.
- Davies: Well, I couldn't do it. I think that is using your best-friendship in a terrible way, don't you?
- Riess: But the friendship is separate.
- Davies: Well, I think I did it for Elkus over here. He's not my best friend at all, but he has a lot of money. I think at that time I wrote him a letter, and he wrote back and said all his money is in some youth thing over here. Richard Elkus. He is my neighbor. That wasn't hard to do because I hardly ever see him but about twice a year. So it's not a really personal thing at all. But your best friend?

Those Gettys are well informed. At the Black and White Ball they were invited to come, and they did and brought all four children! But they know they are being courted, and they expect it.

- Riess: Hard to know the protocol.
- Davies: Well, they try to get a personal person that knows them. That is the way. But not too close, you see. Just somebody who knows them.
- Riess: Perhaps Brayton can go directly.
- Davies: Maybe he has. I wouldn't doubt it. But he would like them to give more. He probably did get the \$500,000 that way.

Nobody had to sell me on the idea, I told you how Gwin Follis got me involved in the beginning, and I knew him very well, and he said, "Look, they do need a new symphony hall there." So, nobody had to sell me on the idea, except they upped it a little bit.

- Riess: I see from the Symphony program that you have given another \$3,000,000. [January 4, 1984]

Davies: This is Brayton. I told him that I would support it [the Louise M. Davies Guest Conductor Fund] but that I didn't think he should put the amount of money in. But he said, "No, that will get other people to do it."

Riess: It's interesting to read in the Symphony program the various corporate donors. Hewlett-Packard, Shaklee, Transamerica, Bronson & Bronson, etc. Are you involved in getting any of that?

Davies: No. I suppose that Brayton goes to all those people, or somebody does. He came to me. I didn't know anything about the endowment. I knew it was coming before he came--I know the family a little bit--I was warned. But these other people--well, these foundations all have paid people that you see.

I just wonder why more people don't give. They could give, but they don't. That is psychologically kind of interesting to me. This thing has brought out in me a lot of knowledge about other people, and about giving. I guess I am self-motivated. I don't need anybody. I came to them, they didn't come to me. Charlotte Mailliard, she's certainly a self-motivated person. Nobody had to come to her. She just wanted to do it, and she did it, and she's very capable of doing it.

These other people--what I'm trying to say is, I think many people would enjoy giving if they knew they had the ability. They don't seem to enjoy having their money. It's a great pleasure for me to give that, and it would be for anybody, because you see people enjoying it. At first I didn't want to put my name on it. I kept thinking of Ralph. I said, "Well, I don't know whether I do or not." He said, and this is the thing that clicked it with me--this is Brayton again--he said, "Look, you may not think so, but if you did it, that would make other people say, 'Well, after all, I have some money; if she did it--' and that helps other people give. Now will you do it?" I said, "Yes."

Riess: Perhaps your gift to the guest conductor fund then inspired Phyllis Wattis.

Davies: Well, she's a very generous woman. I think she would have done it anyway. She's given a lot. She came to Brayton the other day and she said, "Brayton, I think I'll give some money to that endowment." He said to me, "Now, you see?"

Riess: I want to hear more about your little book about volunteers.

Davies: Oh, this is interesting. I sent it to Hal Silverman. Do you know who he is? California Living editor. A kind of astonishing fellow. He put that thing [photograph of Louise Davies as Mrs. Santa

Claus] in there California Living]and I thought, "My gosh, do I look that bad?" I was going to call him up and give him Holy Ned, and then I thought, "Oh well, I must have looked that way!" I wrote this about volunteers, and I sent it to him, and I don't know that he'll print it--in fact I think it's probably not his thing--but I thought maybe he would help me with it.

It's come upon me that there are many, many kinds of volunteer jobs. In fact I heard about another one the other night. I went over to this dinner given by Dr. Morrissey's son. And one of them is a deputy sheriff. Did you know there were deputy sheriffs? The other night I had a thing that happened here. Shirley Temple called me up about nine o'clock. She said, "Some woman here wants to come and see you. She says she's lost." I said, "Look, Shirley." I was in bed. [laughter] She said, "I think I'd better call the police." I said, "I think you'd better." So she called the police and about six men came out, and they combed the neighborhood. They couldn't find anyone; she'd disappeared. It's kind of nervy.

This man, this young fellow, he told me at the dinner that that's what he does. He goes down and gives his time. They get these calls all the time. Some of them, like this one--they finally came to see me and they said, "We can't find anybody." There were about six of them, in three cars, and one of them undoubtedly was a volunteer. He told me something funny. He said--he had asked me where I came from--"In Plumas County they have a lot of posses. And they are volunteers." Now, I haven't heard about that before. The more you hear about a subject, the more you learn, don't you? The more interested you get.

I know about women volunteers. Charlotte's one, Kathy's one. They don't get paid at all. It's just the pleasure and the honor, and having a great interest. And being very influential. They get paid that way. It's just amazing to me. But if I'm learning about it, I think the general public doesn't know about it so much. So I started writing this in my mind. I wrote one and I sent it to Hal Silverman. I said, "Do you think this is of interest to you? Or who would be interested in it?" I said, "I don't know that I'm quite capable of making it interesting enough to be published." I found him a very interesting man. He did the thing in California Living about the Little Sisters of the Poor ["Santa's Helpers," pp. 12-15, 12/25/84]. He interviewed the sisters, too, and I was amazed at the depth of his feeling about it. He is in the business of writing these things, but the motivation back of them and all that, he got that. I was a little surprised.

I've known Hal quite a long while. A long, long time ago he did a story about the firehouse, and so I got to know him. He's come down here a couple of times. Then Walter Blum did a long thing

on me. We had lots of fun about it. I don't know exactly whether he came to me or I came to him about the Little Sisters, but he came out before the thing happened. He said, "I'm not going to do the story now, but I'll do it afterward." He was very excited about doing it. I can't quite understand now why I was so surprised at his depth of feeling about the Little Sisters. He stayed for lunch. I was just amazed. He really felt a lot about it.

Riess: I certainly think whatever you've written about volunteers belongs here in the oral history.

Davies: I will give it to you. I got so tired of rewriting it. I have approached it from several different angles, and I'm just wondering which is the better. The things you read, even in that California Living thing, are awfully well done. The way they put their thoughts together is pretty wonderful. I don't know who reads it, but it is well done.

Keeping Busy

Riess: When Ralph died, how did your life change? What activities were you able to take on then that you had always wanted to do?

Davies: Well, I had belonged to a book club, I belonged to a Spanish club, I'd go to the Symphony, and sometimes I used to go to the lectures. I led a very ordinary life. But since then I haven't gone to the book club, and I haven't gone to the Spanish club, except here and there, because I can't do it all.

Riess: What was the Spanish club?

Davies: They still go, and they still miss me. Once in a while I go to a party they give, but I haven't gone to the meetings. We used to meet once a week. Now it's twice a month. We have a teacher. We like each other so much, we're always visity, and then we decide we'd really better do some Spanish. We've gone through the book about three times now. We've been together for at least twelve years or more, and we're still on the same book; we just go over and over the book. [laughter]

We make up sentences. But then everyone has so much to talk about, it's awfully hard to keep on the subject of Spanish. We have a good time. These meetings, they're like the quilting bees. Now they're starting that again. It's kind of a nice idea, for diversified women. You don't belong to a sewing group--you don't look that type--but maybe you paint or you write?

Riess: How did the Spanish club group get together?

Davies: I don't know how. The lady that started it, I went to Puerto Vallarta with her for about fifteen years every year, and I stayed about a week, and sometimes I'd bring my children and so forth. That's who started it. She invited us all there, and we decided we'd better learn a little Spanish since we were going to Puerto Vallarta. Now it's more or less a social group. So is my book club, which I haven't been to for so long.

I go to the city now four days a week for one thing and another, and it is crazy. That's why I have this back trouble. This woman doctor I have said, "I think you're crazy! What do you think you are? A woman of your age! I'm fifty-five and I couldn't do what you do."

Riess: Well, you are going on your cruise next week.

Davies: Yes, that's for two weeks. We go down the coast, through the canal, and we go to two or three of those islands over there and end up in some town in Puerto Rico, and then we fly home. I'd rather stay, but nobody else is staying so I'll come home too.

Dr. Shumate is going, too. His family--it's a long story, they had a whole string of drugstores a long time ago. He's going, and the woman he's going with is Paula Fagio. He was married a long time ago to a Borel. The Borels and the Meyers had a private banking thing many years ago. That marriage, to the Borel, was annulled.

Dr. Shumate has written quite a few books. He is a Knight of Malta, and he's a doctor, though he really didn't need to be for the money of it. The Shumates were a very rich family.

Ed Morrissey is going, and Jean Kuhn, Georgianna Stevens's sister. He owns a railroad car, like the one in Europe, and you can hire his railroad car and hook it up anyplace in the United States and take a trip. He has a cook and he has a couple of maids. I don't know how successful it is, but that's one of his jobs.

Riess: Your lifestyle could have changed after Ralph died. Did you consider a butler, a secretary, and breakfast in bed?

Davies: I'm not that kind of person. Never have been and never will be. [laughs] I don't like luxury. I've never had it. That would mean nothing to me. It wouldn't appeal to me one little bit.

Riess: A secretary?

Davies: I do write many letters. I did have a girl come down from the University of San Francisco a couple of years ago, but it was almost more trouble to tell her than it was to do it myself. You know what I mean? Somebody I know has a secretary come in three times a week. Of course if you got to know somebody and got somebody to know you, then it would be different. Pay the bills and--.

Riess: Arrange parties?

Davies: Oh, that's not that difficult.

Riess: When you invite a hundred for New Year's Eve, do you call them all? Or send them an invitation?

Davies: No, I write them a note. Then I have a caterer, and he just comes, so that's not very difficult.

Riess: The secretary takes care of the details, the caterer, the flowers.

Davies: Oh, that's what I like to do! I guess Ralph was that way in a way. Of course he had a secretary all the time, but I mean I think it wouldn't be my style. I think most people do things themselves, don't they? They called Ralph a lone man, but as far as I can see, most people do things by themselves. They make decisions.

Riess: What determines whose parties get in Pat Steger's column? Maybe a secretary would handle that.

Davies: I know Pat Steger, and I think she tries to get a wide variety. I'm glad that she doesn't get me. It's better this way. How's that!

That kind of social column doesn't exist anyplace else. Really they have mostly been outlawed. That's what I hear. Kind of interesting, isn't it? It is small town here. It's like Quincy. They have a weekly thing when they've played bridge and had lemonade. It's that kind of thing. It's been going here a long time, all those society things. When it first started, a long time ago, it was not supposed to be "nice" to get into a public column like that. My mother and my aunt said to me, "Why do you allow it?" It really isn't very nice, when you come to think of it. It's like an advertisement. The "nice people" didn't do it; they would never allow their name to be put in a thing like that. Now that has changed, and people do read Herb Caen or Pat Steger to see "who he's been seeing now," or something.

The Nuns from St. Patrick's

Riess: Do you ever attend the Wednesday morning rehearsals at the Symphony Hall?

Davies: I love them. I really enjoy them more than the other. Do you know that they are absolutely packed? There's no room. I used to send my little nuns to it, and they loved it, because it was in the morning. When I've gone I was just amazed that every seat was filled.

Riess: Which group of nuns is this?

Davies: These are the ones that I'm somewhat partial to, the sisters down at St. Patrick's. They're French. They come from Quebec. I've known them forever. A long time ago they were cloistered, they couldn't go out. Father Munier said, "You know, those little nuns can't go anywhere, and they're French." He said, "Why don't you go down and see them, and if you wanted to you could invite them up here. That's all right with me." So it started a long time ago. I would invite them up here and we would have tea, and they would sing. A couple of times a year they would come. Now they are not cloistered; they can go anywhere.

Riess: They would sing?

Davies: Oh yes, they sing in French. All kinds of songs. We'd just have tea, and they'd sing. Just singing for ourselves.

They came at Christmas. They didn't come with the other people, but they came one day. Brother Benedict usually comes, and he does magic for them. This last time I had the little children come, the neighbor children, and they sang for them. It's kind of nice. They don't see children, all they see is those young men down there. The neighborhood children came in and sang and talked to them and helped. It's just nice to see little children. I love little children, don't you? Those nuns are the ones who cook for the boys who are going to be priests at St. Patrick's Seminary. You don't know about it? I have given equally--well, one of them I gave a little more than equally--to all the orders around the Bay Area, because I know they need it.

Going to the Symphony with Alice Buck

Riess: I read the book by David Schneider about the San Francisco Symphony. He played with the Symphony since 1936. And you have been going to the Symphony since 1934 yourself?

Davies: Yes, and how did that happen? [laughs] Let me see now. First of all, I like the Symphony. Then, somebody always influences you, and it sort of reaches a chord in you, or you wouldn't respond. (I guess that's what love is. Some accord there that maybe you can't explain.)

You know our great friends the Bucks, Alice Buck went to the Symphony and had a box. I went with her in her car, on Fridays I think it was. She knew everybody in Woodside and introduced me to everybody and I became her sort of protegee. Would I have done it on my own? I don't know that I would have right away. I probably would have later. But this was an easy thing to do. She had a car, and she went every time. So I joined.

Symphony Fridays

Davies: We always went on Fridays, though about ten years or so ago I changed it to Thursdays, but it had been Friday for a hundred years.

Riess: Who else was in that box?

Davies: There were six of us. Mrs. Frank Summers was one. The Summers family owned all of Portola Valley; they were big, big landowners. Pearl, all her money came from a big foundry that they had over in Oakland.

Riess: Mrs. Frank Summers was part of the box.

Davies: Yes, she graduated from Berkeley with Alice Buck, in about 1906. Unbelievable.

Riess: And the others in the box?

Davies: Mrs. Erma McBride. She started the Allied Arts. The McBride money all came from Honolulu. She was married before. Before Honolulu the McBrides came from Scotland.

This started back in 1934. Then when the war in Europe was going on Alice's sister Olga came over from Paris. I want to mention this because I'm still wearing Olga's ermine cape. My friend who is in the fur business, and who has fixed it for me about ten times--meaning at least five--said, "Don't you think you need a new ermine coat?" I said, "Look, I only wear it to the Opera."

Olga Meyer never married. Very interesting woman, quite a character, and so different from Alice. When Alice married, Olga moved to Paris and lived there for twenty years, although she owned the house as much as Alice did. Alice died about ten years ago. She was ninety-six.

That connection is why I happened to be there [Symphony] permanently. If I had been by myself I just would have gone when I felt like it, like people do, I guess. But she was going and I like music and she said, "Come, and go with us." It was a box of six women and every one of them had a history.

It kept changing; when one died, someone else would come. It dissolved just before the new Symphony Hall was built. Up to that time I was still with them. All those years! The box was right in the very front, not very good for music, but there you were. Box U or V or something, way over at the side.

Riess: The Fridays were all subscription?

Davies: No, you could get a seat, but I would only have gone when I felt like it. When I lived in Oakland I had friends there who used to go regularly, and I said, "Well, isn't that wonderful." But it never occurred to me that I was going to do it. It was only when I moved here and met Alice Buck that I went. So, is life a series of happenings? Well, you wouldn't respond unless you had a like feeling, isn't that true?

Riess: It must have introduced you to a great number of people.

Davies: Oh yes, because they were well established here. Her father built the house.

Riess: Why do you think she made you her protegee?

Davies: She didn't have any children, and I was twenty-five years younger than she is, and I guess she must have liked me. I certainly liked her. She really was a brilliant woman. When I say brilliant--I tell you, when her father died the trustees came to her, and they said to her, "You are capable of going on where your father left off." They asked her to take it over, but she said, "Nobody did it in my day, and I couldn't."

Well, that's the story of how I got into the Symphony.

Riess: Did you know Lenora Wood Armsby, who apparently brought Pierre Monteux here?

Davies: A little bit. She ran the Symphony for years. She was in back of it. She was like Brayton Wilbur is now.

Riess: Some highlights in 1934--I wonder if you remember George Gershwin coming and playing the "Rhapsody in Blue," or Marian Anderson?

Davies: I remember Anderson. Frankly I don't remember the other one. But then sometimes you say, "Did I hear them? Or did I think I heard them?"

I remember when Marian Anderson came. Marian Anderson was deeply religious--most Blacks are--and she was absolutely perfection. Leontyne Price [on program of 1984 opening] is fine, but Marian Anderson was something else again. Do you remember they wouldn't let her sing in that hall in Washington and Eleanor Roosevelt came out and said, "Well, we won't have it, unless she can sing." It was Roosevelt who brought the Blacks into our life.

Riess: In Schneider's account he says that Marian Anderson's appearance in 1935 really brought Blacks into the Opera House for the first time.

Davies: Yes. I think she was a mezzo-soprano. I can hear her now. She sang a lot of spirituals.

Pierre Monteux was perfection. Who was the violinist who said he always played a wrong note so that he wouldn't be perfect? Monteux was a perfectionist. He loved to play French music, lots of Debussy, which I am very fond of. He had a most unusual wife. I don't know what happened to the first one, but the second one [Doris] was very gregarious, and she'd often get up and talk at the Symphony or say something. She was very different!

Relationships are very interesting to me. Yehudi Menuhin--his son was just here--his wife, an Englishwoman, would never stop talking. I said to the son, "Your father never talks when she's around, does he?" He said, "He never says a word, he just beams at her." This is his own mother. But he said, "I never can talk; my mother's always talking." So, you see, it works both ways, but usually the other way--the man is the one who talks.

Riess: Were you really at the Symphony for every performance?

Davies: I got bored with Monteux, and other people did too, and sometimes I'd skip it and go shopping or some place, and I'd meet someone else, and I'd say, "You too?" [laughs] He was there for about twelve years! We'd say, "He is good, but sometimes it's nice to have a change."

Riess: Do you know Agnes Albert?

Davies: Yes, she's a lovely person, a concert pianist. Her family is the oldest family in San Francisco.* Her mother lived to be ninety-six. The Tobins. They started the Hibernia Bank.

Riess: I recall a lot of acrimony between the newspaper music critics when I came here in the early 1960s. Alfred Frankenstein and Alexander Fried.

Davies: Yes, it still goes on. Have you read about firing [Michael] Smuin from the Ballet? It's a terrible thing. It's the meanest thing, and it's all over the paper. I wrote and I said, "You should have handled this differently, even if they wanted to fire him." Naturally there are critics, but in this case they did it in the wrong way. Summarily said, "You're out."

After Monteux was the [Enrique] Jorda period. He was such a nice man, but he really wasn't, I guess, a great conductor. That criticism hurt his reputation. If you get fired from a job like that, it's pretty bad. He was a sweet, gentle man. He went to mass every morning. I think at that time I was going too then. Maybe he wasn't a great conductor, but it's awfully hard.

Riess: Was the social function of the Symphony increasing over those years?

Davies: Oh, I think so, especially the Friday afternoons. Half of them were there because it was the thing to do. I don't think it is so much anymore. My husband, if I took him to the Opera, after about the first act he went sound asleep. But he worked hard, you know.

* Family of Richard Tobin (1832-1887), who founded Hibernia Savings and Loan Society (1859) with his brother Robert J. Tobin.

Riess: Well, there's plenty of precedent for that!

Davies: [laughs] He went once, or maybe twice, but that was it.

Lunch Clubs, and Fortune Tellers

Riess: When you and the ladies went down to the city on Fridays, would you have lunch?

Davies: Yes, we had lunch before at the Francisca Club.

When I moved down to Woodside in 1932 it was dominated by people who had lived here for thirty or forty years, and in no way could you ever break into their friendship unless you had somebody like Alice Buck, because she just took me and invited me and I went everywhere with them. I got into the Century Club, and the Francisca Club and the [Woodside-Atherton] Garden Club. I'm putting up a woman now, a lovely person, a volunteer for the Symphony. She went to the Century Club and said she'd like to belong, and they need younger people. Now I'm the oldest member of the Century Club--and the Garden Club--and they're giving me a luncheon in November and they're calling it Louise Davies Day, because I'm the oldest living member. I've been there since 1934. That is a long time!

It's quite a job to put up people. I don't know how Alice Buck did it, but now you have to know ten members and they have to write letters. You have to appear before the admissions committee. They look you over. I was on the admissions committee for a while and it was horrible. They'd say, "There's something wrong with her mother," or her husband, or whatever. Then they'd try again sometimes with a different admissions committee and get in. You know about admissions committees?

Riess: Yes, and you strike me as being a lot more egalitarian than all that.

Davies: Well, yes, but I've seen that attitude. And the husband's standing was very important.

We used to have Monday lunch at the St. Francis, and for years and years and years anybody that wanted to see or be seen always went to Monday lunch at the St. Francis. That went on for about forty years. You wouldn't dare miss it because something was going to happen there. I didn't go that often, because it didn't mean

that much to me, but I did go. I think in those years that maybe the Symphony was another thing that you went to because it was the thing to do.

Riess: What happened to the St. Francis luncheon?

Davies: I don't know. The boss, I can see him now, everybody loved him, he was a wonderful man. He brought in dance bands and they used to have a tea dance on Saturday afternoons. That was so long ago. I think it cost fifty cents and you got tea and a lot of little cookies.

Riess: When did Trader Vic's become the social lunch place?

Davies: That was a long time ago. He [Victor Bergeron], as you know, started in Emeryville. I remember it when we lived in Oakland. Hinky Dink or something, a place way out there. He had four children, and a wife, very Italian. He's not well. I saw him the other day over at the Miller's--Mrs. Robert Watt Miller. Her husband, Robert Watt Miller, kept things going, in fact they built the Opera House. She's really a remarkable woman, and a very independent woman. I like her very much.

Riess: Were the lunch group and your Symphony box group the same?

Davies: No, the Symphony group didn't go to that very much. But I did. My sister Erma, she lived in Piedmont, and everybody went. And this strikes me as very funny, I don't know about you, but there was an era then when everybody went to fortune tellers. They told your palm, or something. Well, lo and behold, Lucy said to me the other day that she was going to somebody. I said, "Lucy!" She said, "Oh, Nana, everybody's doing it!" I said, "What did they say to you?" She said, "Well, he told me that this wasn't the time for getting married." I can't get over it. People still do this!

When I was carrying Ellen, this horrible man--I think we went after the lunch at the St. Francis--he didn't know I was pregnant, but I was, and he said that I shouldn't have any more children, because if I did they were not going to be right. I said, "What do you mean right?" He said, "Mentally, or physically. You shouldn't have any more children."

Well, I carried that child for six months with that thought. I never told anyone. Then finally I went to the priest, and I said, "What do you think about this?" Because these people do say things that fit in. He called it the "work of the devil." He didn't mean an actual devil, but that there are devilish thoughts and people who really want to do something bad, and they sometimes take hold of people, those thoughts. "If I were you, I don't think I'd go back."

But that experience--the man described my sister who died. He said to me something like, "Somebody is guarding you," and I thought it must be Marion, my sister, who I used to pray to as a child, because she died when I was eight. I said to the priest, "How did he know about that?" He said, "I don't know. There are elements in the world that nobody can explain, but if I were you, I wouldn't go back to one of those fortune tellers."

Now, here's Lucy going to one. So they are still going to them, hmm? But it was the thing to do then. "Have you been to this man? He's wonderful," they'd say. But for me, I worried and I prayed. It's an awful thing to tell a pregnant woman her child wasn't going to be right!

Riess: What other social institutions can you tell me about?

Davies: The Century Club was started by Phoebe Hearst in about 1890. One year I was the program chairman, and it kept me busy all year. They met once a week, and all those ladies went. It's more popular now than ever. You have lunch, and a program. Mrs. Silas Palmer, and all the prominent women of those days, went to the Century Club. She had started years ago a drama group, and when I came in I took over the drama and put on several dramas, which was kind of fun. And it was quite a job! All these jobs you take are fun. Like your job. You get more darned information than you would if you stayed home, don't you! [laughter]

Riess: Did the Francisca Club have meetings?

Davies: No, they have no program. But that's where we would have lunch before the Symphony. There were two clubs, and they split about 1914 or 1916 or something over smoking. One group of ladies wanted to smoke and the other didn't, and so they separated. Don't you think that's funny!

Riess: Did Ralph encourage these social connections as a way of furthering his ambitions?

Davies: No, not at all. If he did, I never felt it.

Musicians' Lives

- Riess: In David Schneider's book he asks the question, "What is it about conducting that allows a man such a long and productive life?" He was thinking about Monteux, conducting when he was eighty-five, and Toscanini, Fiedler, Stokowski.
- Davies: Well, it's pretty physical. I watch Edo. He's now going into conducting opera. Oh, gosh, when I met him last night he was dripping! It's very physical. It's the whole person, and that keeps people alive. People die too early if they don't have a mental stimulus, and they die too early if they don't have a physical stimulus. So, in conducting you get both. That keeps you going, I think.
- Riess: Well, after Jorda came Josef Krips.
- Davies: Yes. I liked Krips. His wife was quite a person too.
- Riess: Did you know Seiji Ozawa?
- Davies: Larry Metcalf used to tell me many stories about him, because they went with him to Japan in 1975. I think he had a couple of wives. He was the most temperamental man. He insisted, wherever they'd go--they did all this touring--the wife and the children would go. Larry Metcalf [president of the San Francisco Symphony Association 1974-1980] said, "We were always waiting for Ozawa." It was not easy. He was temperamental, but I guess very very brilliant. He quit the Symphony. He didn't want us.
- Riess: Where did you first meet Edo deWaart?
- Davies: I first met him when he came and talked to the Century Club. Mrs. John Upton [Anna Logan] brought Edo to the Century Club, and that was when he was married to that wife who's now a very big soprano, a little tiny person, and she has a very good voice, and she's in the Opera [Ruth Ann Swenson]. He married two opera singers. Some men have to have a woman. Mostly I guess it's emotional. Edo has had four legitimate wives, and he's only forty-three or forty-four. [laughs] And Sherry [Greenewald], who he never married, but he lived with her for about five years. He could only see her six months out of the year, so he was very lonesome. Now he has a girl who's twenty-seven. Some men, is it music that makes them so active?

Riess: Sexually active, you mean?

Davies: Yes. Why would they be? Where I've seen these musicians together, and I have, and the wives come along, they're always hugging and kissing each other although they just met five minutes ago. Maybe that's not all of them, but I've seen it. Is it because they are working with emotions? That emotionally you have to be involved? You don't play the piano without emotion, do you? So that emotion is all stirred up in you. So you must have an outlet all the time. It must be something like that.

I went the other night to hear Ernst Bacon's symphony played, for the first time, down in San Jose. Poor darling, he's had four wives. I can't understand this. Oh, I do a little bit. I know Ernst Bacon because of Dr. [Russell] Lee, who used to come over and play the piano all the time. I did fund one of his concertos or something. But this new wife is younger than springtime; she can't be more than about thirty-five. She's been married to him for ten years. Their boy looks like a little angel, gosh he's cute. He has about six children by all those other wives.

Artists are extremely sensitive people. Edo had a lot of opposition among the higher-ups. People like that, if they have clout enough they could throw him out. He's heard that, and I think he's extremely sensitive. That's why he needs a woman, to pat him on the back all the time. This little girl he has now [present wife], they sat in front of us one night at the Opera I guess it was, and she had her arms around him all through the Opera. I said, "Well, that's what he likes!" It would have killed my husband!

Edo is so young. He hasn't had a very good background. I mean his mother and father were divorced when he was about eight or something, so he feels a little shaky in that realm. Maybe he doesn't like criticism. Who likes criticism? As you get older you don't mind; you say, "Well, not everybody can like me, so what's the difference?" You see what I mean? But when you're young it must mean a lot, especially to a musician, or an artist.

I think that artists have a hard time. My granddaughter Lucy is a good example. She can get very hurt and tears in her eyes if I tell her, "I don't like your hair that way," or something. Because these people live on their emotions. She is very vulnerable, and I think Edo is too. He wants a woman who will always be right there, somebody to tell him morning, noon, and night, "You are the most wonderful person in the world!"

Postscript

Riess: [rustling through papers]

Davies: Have you asked all the questions? You do do a bit of homework, don't you?

Riess: Well, before we really call this finished, I want you to add whatever you wish in a "last word" way. We've gone lots of directions and with plenty of diversions. I want you to be sure you've really had your say!

[Presented as a Postscript is Mrs. Davies' response to the interviewer's request. Written spontaneously, Mrs. Davies' thoughts emerge in sometimes fleeting phrases. The statement is presented with changes in punctuation, but it bears the poetic stamp of its author.]

Davies: Thinking and writing about my family--first of all, my mother, Katherine Chandler Stivers Houck, born in Iowa on a farm in 1860, came to California with her mother and father and sister Nellie and for some unknown reason settled in Quincy, Plumas County, California, in 1863. I think I remember the ranch was six hundred acres, either given by the government, or very low-priced, a valley surrounded by the mountains and a river, arable land. Grandpa Chandler was very industrious and a very hard worker. He grew wheat, oats, had dairy cows--all of which he sold to the gold and silver mines thirty miles away, made famous by the speculators from San Francisco, now a state preserve.

My mother and her sister Nellie were educated in school in Marysville in the arts--music, painting, dressmaking, sewing--and each of these arts my mother excelled in, all her life. And in some way, especially music, I too have had a great interest. I remember after dinner we, the children, would wash and dry the dishes to the tunes we knew, mostly "Way Down Upon the Swanee River," "Ole Folks at Home," "Annie Laurie." My mother would play the piano and we would stand or dance around singing, or improvising tunes of our own.

My father was an adventurer, from Kentucky, and married my mother in Quincy. Both were very individual. My mother had a dominant streak--will--which my father refused or disliked, so

Davies: after 1906, the year Irene was born, Mama hired a place in a four-horse stagecoach, leaving very early in the morning from Quincy, and having breakfast in or about Blairsdon, and on to Reno, where I saw my first train. I can see and feel the awe it caused, steaming billows of smoke, and great loud peeling of bells and clang clang coming to a stop in Reno.

We got off at Sacramento where we lived in a very large, old, three or four-story house, Victorian. Each room had a telephone in it. We children had a happy time telephoning each other, especially when we all came down with scarlet fever and were quarantined. I remember Mama would let us out in the yard early in the morning and we would turn the hoses on each other. It was hot in Sacramento.

Then we went to Seattle. By train. I was told to slip way down in the seat because my mother did not want to pay for me--under six years travelled free. We took a big wicker basket of food with us, which had to last for three days. I don't remember a car serving food, but we did not partake. Everyone, I remember, was good to us, Erma, Irene, Raymond and me.

My sister Marion died in Sacramento of what was called consumption. Marion was an angel, born that way. Angels are born I think. I still pray to her. She was always thinking of everyone but herself.

Seattle in 1901 was the stopping-over place on your way to the Alaska gold mines. We never reached the gold country, but we did go to the Alaska Yukon Exposition. I remember the Fiji Island exhibit particularly--very black men with practically nothing on performing wild dances with yells and calls. Exciting and rather beautiful.

Mama bought a five-acre Bellevue place not far from Lake Washington. She raised chickens, thousands of them, for eggs--which we children delivered to our neighbors. Also we had milk cows, or at least one. I remember delivering milk in a pail in the late afternoon. I had to cross through a field where bulls were. I was scared, but I made up my mind. I would run quickly, spilling some of the milk.

Now we returned to California, Oakland, because my father wouldn't pay alimony out of the state. Again we lived in an old, three-story house, and we went to Lafayette School. Now this area is black. I remember we used to play a game called Run Sheep Run. Boys and girls. We chose sides. Something to do with a baseball bat. The first to go out was given about ten minutes to hide. The chief would call. Then the hunt began. We were always on the run. The call was "Run, Sheep, Run." When the pursuers were close and were near our hiding place...

Davies: Another game I remember was One Foot Off the Gutter.

One Halloween I will never forget we all changed clothes with the boys, and roamed downtown. Or nearly downtown. Scared to death the cops would catch us!

I went one year to Polytechnic High School on Broadway. Then about 1913 or 1914 Mama married Mr. Houck and I was sent off to Rio Vista. St. Gertrude's Academy, run by the Sisters of Mercy. There was a boys school nearby. We, the St. Gertrude's girls, saw very little of the boys—but every once in a while we would find a way to meet them. In the cemetery, of all places.

The sisters were good teachers, and by their Christian lives and their deep faith I became a Catholic about six months after I graduated. The sisters told me to wait 'til I thought about it. I had lessons from Father Leonard at St. Elizabeth's in Fruitvale. My belief has been the mainstay every day of my life. A balance wheel, a direction.

Here I must put down my code of ethics: to accept myself as I am and to accept every person in this world as they are. I will never know what makes all of us the way we are, but I hope for myself to become the best human being I can...whatever that means.

It has taken me a long time all these years to know at least in part why I do the things I do. The good part comes from my mother. I remember on the ranch when we were very small she would tell the hired man and whoever else was there to hitch up the horse, she was going to see a neighbor who was having a baby, or something was happening where my mother was going to help. No questions asked. It was the way in those days. Far from doctors. Far from neighbors.

Everyone helped each other.

APPENDIX A



MRS. RALPH K. DAVIES

*What is man that you should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that you should care for him?
You have made him little less than the angels,
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

Psalm 8: 4-6

To write the story of our forty-seven years of marriage is an impossible task. I will try to tell you some of the high points and some of the not so high, just for the record, as Ralph would say.

Ralph's father, Percival Davies, had a job in the War Department and for some time they lived in Washington D.C. Ralph had a paper route at the age of eight that got him up in the early morning dark. He also sold papers on the street corner, calling out the headlines. Then the family moved to Cherrydale, Virginia, across the Potomac River. Ralph loved this place and during his years as Deputy Petroleum Administrator he would often have Wiley Whisonant, his chauffeur, drive him over to the old home. He enjoyed rambling around the thickets and along the stream, often taking all of us with him. He told us about the time when president Teddy Roosevelt came riding through and stopped to talk—a proud encounter, one to remember.

Harold, Ralph's brother, was subject to colds and was threatened with tuberculosis, so the doctor recommended a warmer climate. Mother Davies took them—Harold, Natalia, Ralph and Edward—to Sanger, a small town just outside Fresno. I don't know why they thought they could manage a new-born vineyard, but they tried. Ralph recalled how he and his Mother took care of the newly-planted vines, watering them every day and digging around the roots. But alas, they didn't flourish for long.

At the age of fourteen, Ralph took a job as office boy in the Standard Oil Co. in Fresno. He finished high school by night.

About this time he bought a horse, paying for it out of his salary week by week. How he loved that horse. But he had an accident, the horse was frightened, and Ralph fell off, suffering a cut that gave him a scar over his eye to the day he died where a tree branch hit him.

When and where does motivation begin? With

Ralph it started way back when he was delivering papers and hawking them on the street corners. I think it was his Mother who often said, "Ralph, you must make something of yourself." At any rate, Ralph told me he was ambitious as far back as he could remember. He wanted to be somebody and he felt in his bones he could. His chance to prove it came quite early at Standard Oil. Right from the start he took to responsibility like a duck takes to water.

Every week in the Fresno Office a report had to be made out—sales, salaries, expenses, et cetera. Ralph assumed the job of writing these up and sending them in to the Head Office at San Francisco. There they attracted the attention and admiration of one George Maile. In 1919, George (later to become our beloved Uncle George) recommended Ralph be brought to the Main Office; and so he came. San Francisco was a big change in many ways, and just the beginning. He wore two undershirts for a year trying to keep warm after the heat and humidity of Fresno. The Standard Oil Company was quite different in those early days. Ralph told about playing handball in the ante-rooms until the Big Boss, George Maile, came through; and how they took up shorthand so they could get an inkling of when they were on the list for a raise. Somewhere about this time, Ralph wrote a book for the company on salesmanship. This amuses me very much because Ralph was certainly not the salesman type in my estimation. But perhaps he was in a way, or how could he have sold the idea of putting up quantities of money to purchase American Independent Oil or to bid for the American President Lines? Basically, he had confidence in himself, and great powers of persuasion, although he never had to persuade me to become his wife.

On July third, 1924, my sister Irene and two other girls went to Pop McCray's, an old family resort on the Russian River by way of North Western Pacific Railroad. Arriving at our cabin, I found I had left my handbag on the train. Our next door neighbor happened to be Ralph and his friend Ed Pulliam—with a Standard Oil car. Ralph offered to drive me down to the station to see if anyone had turned in my bag. To this day I can't remember if I ever found it.

My first impression of Ralph was that he was very handsome, had a twinkle in his eye when he smiled, and a droll way of speaking, sort of whimsically—a man not easily put into a mold. And he wore good-



Ralph K. and Louise Davies on their honeymoon—Brockway, Lake Tahoe, August 1925.

looking suits. More than that, he was very pleasant and helpful to me.

Soon after this meeting and a few dates with Ralph, I took a job in Los Angeles—I was looking for new experiences. This had all been arranged before I met Ralph. My job was with the Western Costume Company—today I would be called a secretary but in 1924 I was a stenographer. My cousin attending the University of Southern California lived in a Sorority House and they invited me to live there. One night while I was upstairs waiting for Ralph to take me out, some of the girls made an excuse to go down and look the man over—it was the custom. One girl came back up quickly, exclaiming, “that fellow is so good-looking, so well-dressed and has such a pleasant smile—I could go for him”! After that outburst I took another long look, even though I already thought he was something special.

In those days the usual gift from a man to a woman was candy. Ralph, who was not the usual man, sent me books. One of the first books he gave me was Anatole France's *Joan of Arc*. I still have it.

After a few more dates (Ralph was reorganizing something in the Standard Oil Company) I did a little self-searching: did I really love this man? Did I want to marry him? The answer was yes! I moved back to Oakland and took a job in San Francisco. I commuted by ferry boat, nearly always meeting Ralph on the five-fifteen home run. We would often be at the back of the ferry boat where the seagulls followed us all the way to Oakland.

Ralph was thin then: I thought he might like me thin too, so I lost about fifteen pounds that winter, although I can't quite remember how I did it. Many times we had lunch at Fisherman's Wharf—we bought cracked crab and sat on the benches overlooking the Bay or the Marina where all the sailboats are and the fishing boats all painted blue and white, Our Lady's colors. I remember going to the old California Market where we sat at the counter and snapped tiny Hunter's Point shrimps. We walked many times along the waterfront. Little did we know we would one day be in the shipping business!

One Sunday Ralph invited me to go to Brookdale Lodge for lunch. He was driving a car borrowed from the Standard Oil Company again, which was against the rules, of course. He soon suggested I take the wheel. Never had I driven before. Almost immediately I backed into a ditch and the rear wheels were mired so deep we had to find a garage to pull us out. Typical of his attitude towards any kind of difficulty, Ralph insisted I take the wheel again, saying, “If you don't do it now, you will lose the courage to try again.”

Ralph never really asked me to marry him, in so many words. One day after the ferry ride to Oak-

land, he thought a walk around the Lake would be pleasant. We stopped in the gardens of the Holy Names Convent, now Kaiser's Building. Walking was one of our chief occupations before then and after because we enjoyed it and we didn't own a car. When we sat down on a bench to rest, Ralph gently pulled a hairpin out of my hair and twisted it around my ring finger. “Does it fit?” he asked. “Of course,” I said. I had been waiting six months for this to happen.

We were married on August twenty-ninth at the Sonoma Mission with his friend Ed Pulliam as our witness. Next day we took the train to Brockway, Lake Tahoe. Ralph had one of his rare vacations then.

I remember swimming off the Pier in the rain. Jake Obexer, the Standard Oil's representative at the Lake, took us out one day for a ride in his launch. Far out in the Lake the launch broke down and refused to budge. Lightning came, thunder rumbled and cracked, the wind howled, rain fell in torrents. And there we sat for hours and hours. Finally, Jake managed to get us back to the shore. How, I'll never know, but Jake had a vocabulary that could shake you out of any situation.

Speaking of Lake Tahoe, my friend Ruth Hunt recently wrote the following to me:

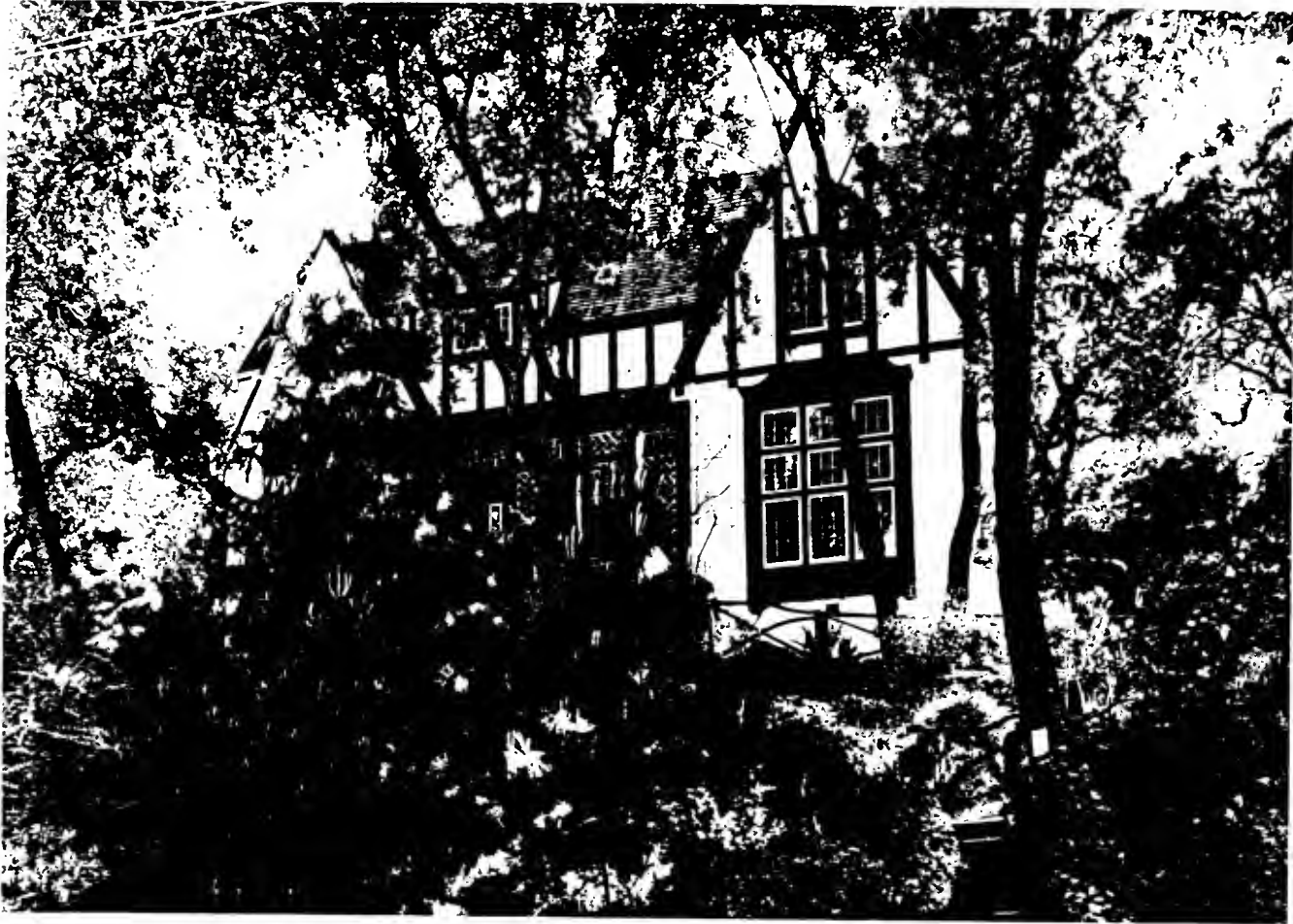
Others have written and will write of the Ralph Davies' many accomplishments, but we will deal here only with their farsightedness in acquiring the land along Lake Tahoe where they built their mountain house in 1932.

Unhappily, a lightning-caused fire had previously swept up the mountainside and destroyed a fine stand of silver fir, Jeffery pine, and red cedar trees. When the Davies acquired the property, it was covered with manzanita and other low-growing shrubs. Their land is now closely covered with a beautiful stand of well-shaped, healthy trees.

People now remark how far-sighted the Davies were in preserving the land in one piece. It is a heritage of beauty.

The sunsets of brilliant colors (particularly after a storm) are surpassed only by the rainbows, sometimes one inside another, that span the sky and send viewers scurrying for their cameras. From the Davies' place there are many other breathtaking scenes one would like to preserve on film, such as the deep intensities of blue and green seen in the Lake after a storm. As the sun sinks below the distant mountains, the commingling of these color intensities is difficult to describe.

Not long after our honeymoon, one Sunday morning we found an ad in the *Examiner*: “For Rent, small English cottage in Ross.” It was charming, tucked away in the tall redwoods on Woodside Lane.



First Home—Brookwood Road, Trestle Glen, Oakland.



St. Hilary's, Tiburon. Painting by Harold Davies.

one bedroom and bath, small kitchen, an absolutely enormous fireplace—I could stand in it. Our landlords, Dr. and Mrs. Smythe, couldn't have been nicer to two greenhorns. They introduced us to the landed gentry of Ross, people who had been there for several generations (and many still are), and to the young marrieds as well. Mrs. Smythe also tried to teach me something about cooking but without much success. The night before we were married I confessed to Ralph I didn't know how to cook—not my forte. "Well, you can open a can, can't you?" I have been doing just that for these many years.

Every morning and almost every evening during the year we lived in Ross, I walked down to the Station with Ralph at seven-thirty a.m. and again at five-thirty to meet his train. That is, until Ralph began to work late. We had no car, no telephone at first and we tried to be vegetarians. We were idealists. We were going to be open with each other, tell all our thoughts, emotions and feelings—and we did try. However, it soon became apparent we had quite different reactions to things and we had better stick to what we could agree on.

Although I had a hope chest full of linens and so on and we had received wedding presents—silver from my sister Erma, and many things from my mother—there were still items we needed to set up house. Ralph and I had a joint checking account. For some reason, I thought that he made a large salary, and so I blithely wrote checks all over nearby San Anselmo for kitchen wares, furniture and appliances. Every check bounced! Ralph was forced to tell me that he earned only \$350.00 per month. I was so embarrassed about the returned checks that I did not go near San Anselmo for a solid month. Thereafter we made endless budgets—what to spend on rent, food, clothes and entertainment. Never did the budgets work out. Does anyone's? Near the end of our second year Ralph decided to put me on an "allowance".

From that year in Ross one kindness stands out in my memory: one Sunday the Young's gave us the loan of their car to go anywhere we wanted all day long. Such thoughtfulness is never forgotten and produces in the recipient a desire to go and do likewise. I hope I have. I know Ralph has many times over.

In 1926 Ralph designed an English style house. At least the facade was English. He had owned a lot in Trestle Glen, Brookwood Road. My brother Raymond built the house with the help of many contractors. It later was torn down and the property is now under the MacArthur Freeway.

In 1928, the Vice President in charge of Sales, H. T. Harper, and R. R. Kingsbury, the President of Standard Oil, decided Ralph should go to London

and reorganize the ailing Anglo American Oil Company.

Off we went with but two weeks notice. We bought new clothes—evening dresses for me, a dinner suit for Ralph—leaving behind bills galore. John Black took over the monthly payments, bless him. We had instructions to live like representatives of the prestigious S.O. CO. And we did! Ralph took to this kind of living. He always liked to spend freely. I, however, had a hard time, thinking about all those bills we left behind.

Our first dinner I'll never forget. We were staying at the St. James Hotel (no longer there) near St. James Park. It was very very British. We descended to the Dining Room all dressed up and found absolutely no one there except the maitre d' and the waiters—all in white ties and tail coats. About ten o'clock or later people began to arrive. The 24th of June, it was *THE SEASON*, something we had never heard of before.

In London the large, hospitable Powell family took us in hand. Frank, one of the sons, was married to Florence (Flossie) Pratt of the Rockefeller clan. Another son was married to an English girl and so on. They all had children and nannies to care for them. Of course, each had a large household and many servants. Not having any of the above, my conversation was rather nil when left alone with the ladies. However, I made up for my lack of experiences with children and servants by telling them tales of my childhood on the ranch in Quincy! They reacted by saying I must be "pulling their leg".

To keep myself busy (Ralph was away much of the time) I found the Davies Family Crest in the British Museum. I made a banner displaying the Crest which Ralph liked very much.

We spent nearly every weekend at the Powell's country home and met many people. We were never introduced—it seems if you are a guest in an English home, you are automatically accepted and need no introduction. It was a whole new fabulous world to us, and one we could not enter wholeheartedly. But we did get an education in English mores.

Ralph's experience with Anglo Oil was good training because he was in charge and learning the ways of another company. He was not successful in his attempts to change the ways of the English, however. Even though he offered more pay, the employees would rather take less money and not move up. Give up their afternoon tea? Indeed not!

At the end of little over a year, Ralph was offered the Presidency of the Anglo Oil Company. I wanted to go home. I was homesick, having lost a much-wanted baby and endured an operation. But the decision was a hard one for Ralph. All evening and far into the night he walked through Hyde Park. He



Frank Buck



Mrs. Frank Buck



George Maile

was greatly tempted to accept Anglo's offer. His English Father and Irish Mother were both directly from the old country. England held great charm for him. However, about four in the morning he opened our door and announced, "I'm taking you home". You can imagine how overjoyed I was.

A good thing we went home! Ralph was appointed the youngest Director in the Standard Oil Co. He had shot up like a rocket, Hilda Anderson said. Hilda was the secretary for H. J. Harper on the Eighteenth Floor where all the Directors had their offices. She had started to work at seventeen.

Ralph was put in charge of Standard Stations when we arrived home. As the Stations did not have an emblem, such as Shell's, Ralph designed the blue and red Chevron—which resembles the family crest. It has been modified some but is still his design. I feel a swell of pride whenever I see it all over the world!

I cannot leave our stay in England without saying that without Marguerite Hewitt (now Wildman) my life would have been very lonely. Her father was the comptroller of the Anglo Company and Marguerite undertook to show me London—the churches, the parks, the British Museum, Parliament, art galleries, the Dickens' places of interest, the Cheshire Cheese Pub, the Temple Bar—all fascinating. I learned history from the British standpoint.

Back in Oakland, our daughter Maryon was born in 1930. She was named for a dear sister I lost many years ago, who in turn was named for my father, George Marion Stivers. In 1931 Ellen was born, named for Ralph's mother, Nellie Waldron.

1932 was a big year for us. First of all we rented the Graham Stuart house on Gerona Road on the Stanford Campus. We liked it so much we never went back to Oakland. We lived in the Stuart house for two years. We met many professors' families, including the Herbert Hoovers. We knew the Ray Lyman Wilburs, the Hugh Jacksons, the Paul Holdens. In fact, I feel not a stranger to Stanford, right there in the backyard, as it were. Ralph was made a Consulting Professor in the Business School through which he met and employed Ed Littlefield and several others. I was very flattered to be on the Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the University under Ray Lyman Wilbur.

In 1933 Ralph went to Washington to work with N. R. A. along with Howard Marshall and two others. They were idealists—out to change the ways of the Government, under the edict of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In 1934 our Alice was born, named for our dear friend Alice Buck.

We met Alice and Frank Buck at Tahoe, summer of 1932. We had rented the Howard Fletcher house on Rubicon Beach for two months. One day Alice

and Frank came to the door to take a look at the old wood planks that Catherine Fletcher (nicknamed Krafty after her father) had had carried over from the old Frost Barn near Bliss Park, the first resort on Rubicon way back in the 1860's before there was a road around the Lake. Mrs. H. T. Harper's father was Mr. Frost. I was just about to put Ellen into the Kitchen sink—her tub—when Alice and Frank arrived. They had just purchased the adjoining four hundred feet. Later that year, I think it was, Frank and Dr. Frank Hinman bought the whole acreage from the Anglo Bank. It was formerly Tevis property. Tevis had gone into bankruptcy and the Anglo was the receiver.

Ralph bought eight hundred front feet that year, much to my disapproval. We didn't even own a home down in the Bay Area and here we were buying a summer place! As usual, Ralph was right. He paid forty dollars a front foot, now it is six times that. What is more important, though, our whole family, children and grandchildren, have enjoyed Tahoe these many years.

Here I will bring in our dear Chandler Ide and our darling Uncle George Maile, both of whom have been very close and very dear members of our family. Chandler became Ralph's assistant about 1938 after Perry Johnson left. Not only has he been a loyal friend but a man of great understanding and wisdom. In fact, we could not do without him. Uncle George (related not by blood but by affection) received the weekly reports from Fresno. He knew that the manager there was not writing up the reports; he had heard a young Welshman was. It turned out to be Ralph; the year was 1919. "That young man belongs here in the main office," he declared. So Ralph joined the Headquarters. Uncle George often liked to recall this.

To say Uncle George had a great influence on our lives is to put it justly. I liken him to bread, the staff of life. He was an important part of our family. He was a gentle man, full of tales of his early English childhood, his Irish mother, his travels to America, crossing the continent by way of the Immigrant Train through Canada. The train had a stove in the main section and an old battered piano. The passengers would buy their food when the train stopped, then cook it together and sing and dance! He taught school in Vancouver and finally landed a job with the S.O. Co. in San Francisco.

Most of all we will never forget his eloquent recitations of Shakespeare which he could remember so very well. But his half-singing, half-talking "On the Road to Mandalay" was something no one will ever forget. He was a superb storyteller. His humor and understanding gave a continuity to our family; he was grandfather and friend. He lived to



Howard F. Fletcher and Ralph K. Davies



Howard F. Fletcher and Ralph K. Davies, Rubicon Beach, Lake Tahoe

be ninety eight. I wish he could have made it to one hundred!

How and when did we come to know Doctor Russel V. Lee? When we lived in the Graham Stuart house at Stanford, the Lee family lived down Gerona Road also, though we didn't visit each other. Later on Dorothy Lee and I belonged to a Book Club, so I became acquainted with the family through Dorothy. On looking back, it seems George was the one who brought us together. Every once in a while George would be taken desperately sick at some ungodly hour like two a. m. And who would come out in ten minutes? Russ Lee! Blessings on him. He is like no other person in this world, a staunch friend, counselor, a great raconteur, a man for all time. I am deeply grateful for Russ Lee.

In 1936 we purchased the Moore Acres—twenty three of them from Gladding McBean, who had owned them for some twelve years. At one time our recently purchased property had been part of the Moore Ranch covering over one thousand acres. It in turn was part of the old Spanish Ranch, "Alameda de las Pulgas".

I remember that when we moved into our house in 1940, Woodside Road was a dirt road and every night we could hear the clippity-clop-clippity-clop of a horse and buggy, a man going home to Woodside after working in Redwood City. Sometimes I like to imagine what it must have been like in those old days around here in Woodside.

About 1938 we met Robert Anshen and Steve Allen, architects. Steve will tell their story, and a unique story it is. Only a man like Ralph would have given two young untried architects (they did not even have a license to practice in California) a job to build a large house with stone walls two feet thick, redwood inside and out, windows from ceiling to the floor. What a magic and challenging thing it was to build a completely modern house in 1939! This house—ours and theirs—will stand the test of time and taste. We moved in practically without a stick of furniture in 1940.

Now comes a painful episode—the parting of Standard Oil Company and Ralph. Ever since he was fourteen and the office boy in Fresno, Ralph had wanted to be President of the S.O. Co. But human relations are always on the move, always changing through vanity, jealousy, ambition, and sometimes lacking in goodness, kindness, and compassion. Caught up in the crosscurrents of corporate politics, Ralph did not get the Presidency.

About this time President Roosevelt appointed Harold Ickes to be Secretary of the Interior. In turn, Harold Ickes appointed Ralph Deputy Petroleum Administrator for War.

It is one thing to read and hear about someone,

another thing to meet them personally. This was true of my first meeting with Secretary Harold Ickes. I had heard so much about his being gruff, demanding, the old curmudgeon, that I was fairly fit to be tied, as the saying goes, when he came for Sunday lunch in Woodside. He turned out to be a lamb—loved the garden, knew the names of the plants and flowers, because he loved to garden himself! He was like an old shoe: you felt comfortable with him in less than five minutes.

Right here I would like to tell a little story about Mr. Ickes. It was after the War and Secretary Ickes, some of his staff, his secretary Ellen Morris, Ralph and several others went to Germany by way of Paris. Someone decided it would be a good idea to go to the Follies Bergeres. So with a great deal of maneuvering and high-rank pulling, they obtained a box. All arrived and took in the show with its leggy, high-kicking girls. During the intermission Secretary Ickes got up and left without a word. Someone in the party remarked, "Either he was overstimulated, or very tired."

During Ralph's years in the P.A.W. the President's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, had several times invited me to the White House but since I was living mostly in Woodside, only once could I accept. This once though was an occasion that I never will forget and one I love to recall. Once while I was staying in Washington Mrs. Roosevelt invited me to tea: her secretary phoned me first to arrange a day and a time. Later I received a written invitation. Again her secretary phoned; had I ever been to the White House before? No. "Would you like to invite a friend to come with you?" "I would be very pleased to." Tense Fitzgerald was also in Washington at that time. The next telephone message was that Mrs. Byrd would meet us in the Oval Room and escort us to Mrs. Roosevelt's sitting room upstairs. When we stepped out of the elevator, Mrs. Roosevelt walked down the long hall to greet us. A lesser lady would have waited for us to come to her.

There were about eight or ten Senator's wives present, but the woman I remember most was Madame Perkins, the outspoken Secretary of Labor. (yes, a female!) "Eleanor," she said, "I had a most dull and depressing evening last night at a dinner party. Everyone hated you and Franklin and it was all I could do to control my temper." "What did you go for?", Mrs. Roosevelt asked her. "Well, I was invited and I didn't have anything else to do, so I went. Never again!" Mrs. Roosevelt told us about a dinner party held the night before at the White House where she had men on either side of her who wanted to talk to each other, so, she said, "I just leaned back and closed my eyes and had a little snooze while the men talked." It was a pleasant gossip tea party such as



Chief Seminole, now at Rubicon Beach, Tahoe



The Firehouse, 1088 Green, San Francisco

any friendly group would enjoy. But I had met one of the most gracious ladies I will ever have the pleasure of knowing. Another story Mrs. Roosevelt told was about going through some building when a woman stopped her and inquired. "Haven't I seen you somewhere before?" "Perhaps you have, I'm the President's wife." We all laughed.

Another incident I like to recall is the time I was invited to the White House for a reception for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Ralph's secretary went with me. In fact, she led the way. There was a long line of people waiting to shake the President's hand. The secretary was in front of me; when her turn came to stand in front of the President, she fairly glowed: "Mr. President, this is the happiest moment of my life. I have watched you ride up and down Pennsylvania Avenue, I saw you on the television, listened to you on the radio, and now here I am right in front of you—I am so happy, so proud!" She looked it. The President said, "Come a little closer (he was seated). I want to tell you a secret . . . just now I have heard that General MacArthur has taken the Phillipines—let us be happy together!" And he meant it; he beamed. It was a moment to remember.

When President Truman, Bess and Margaret embarked on a Hawaiian Holiday after President Eisenhower came into office, George Killion gave a dinner party for them. Again, what a difference in meeting them first hand. Such a feisty, gutsy, salty man was President Truman. His personality was all "there there" as Gertrude Stein would say. And Bess ("Boss," as Truman called her) was a cut from the same cloth. Only a lot less.

Adlai Stevenson was a charmer, witty and easy going—it seemed half the women he knew were in love with him: it was not hard to understand why. He was a brilliant man, a little too much so for the average person to appreciate.

You will read about those War years by men who worked with Ralph. It is a dramatic story, to say the least. After the war Ralph received from President Truman the highest award our country can give; The Award of Merit. All the documents, all the information about those momentous years are in the Truman Library in Independence, MO.

Lucy, our granddaughter, did a short dissertation on her grandfather's role in the P.A.W. for her English class. I told her, "Some people think your Grandfather helped to win the War." Lucy said to me, "From all I have read, I think he *won* the War".

I hope someone has told the amazing tale of how the American Independent Oil Company—headed by Ralph—was formed. It's an incredible account, worthy of *genii*: drilling for oil in Kuwait—and finding it! The acquisition and development of the Natomas Company, the bidding for the American

President Lines, are here told well by Bert Graves, Garth Young, and Chandler Ide, among others.

Douglas Carver comes into our lives in at least two ways—the Franklin Hospital, now Ralph K. Davies Medical Center, of which Douglas is Chairman of the Board. Also, Oil in Indonesia.

Now I must go back to 1945 when Ralph bought the Diamond D Ranch and built a house there designed, of course, by Bob Anshen and Steve Allen. The Ranch, located near Middletown, consisted of some ten thousand acres, some with rolling hills and the River running through. Sheldon Bell, the manager, tells his own story. It was meant to be a tax deduction but it proved to be far less, a way to spend money quickly, and far more—a retreat that Ralph took increasing pleasure and interest in. Ralph planted a pear orchard, walnut trees, raised Black Angus cattle, bred quarter horses. He enjoyed riding over the land on his favorite stallion. He fell in love with early California history and the Indians in particular. I think it was about this time he began to collect Charles Russells and Remingtons, although during his years in Washington he knew John Collier, the administrator for Indians, and we have at Tahoe some crockery dug up in Arizona and New Mexico.

When Ralph came home from Washington, one day while walking up Powell Street he took a long look at a cigar store Indian there on the sidewalk where it had been for many years. On a whim, he asked the owner of the cigar store, an older man, if ever he sold the Indian would he remember to let him know. "Never," said the owner. But less than two years went by before the owner phoned Ralph and said most sorrowfully, "I have to sell my store and also my wooden Indian and I want you to have him because you really appreciate him." So up Ralph went one Sunday morning, and amidst an almost tearful goodbye, the cigar store Indian came to Woodside. Chief Seminole is his name, the last of a great tribe. Now he stands tall (some seven feet) in our Rubicon House at Tahoe.

In 1956 Ralph and I had been married thirty years. To commemorate that he gave me a check for fifty thousand dollars—not, he said, to give to the girls, as I usually did, but to do something I really was interested in. For all my life I had, as is said, a love affair with old houses. As a very little girl, when I walked past an old house I would make up a story about the people who might have lived in it. The story was very real for me and it went on for years—all the time we lived in that neighborhood. It began in Sacramento where there was a wealth of old and beautiful mansions. So, with the fifty thousand I went forth in San Francisco. However, I was not only dismayed but almost gave up the whole idea of



renovating and bringing to life an old house there because the prices seemed much too high.

Then, my Alice phoned one day: "Mother, there is an old Fire House on the prettiest street in San Francisco and it's going to be auctioned off at the City Hall—it's been abandoned." I couldn't imagine what I could do with an old fire house, but I did go up to look it over with Sandy Walker, a young architect, and Bob Polister, a young real estate broker. I immediately fell in love with Engine 31. Sandy pointed out the possibilities and Bob inquired about the approximate cost—what it would probably go for at the public auction. By then I had set my heart on it. The auction was great fun. I told all the contestants, "This lovely old fire house should be kept as part of the heritage of San Francisco, a little bit of its graphic history." It had been built on the hill-top because the horses couldn't climb the steep hills.

So, for \$17,300 I bought the little Fire House. I was delighted, as you can imagine.

Then came setting it upright—it was leaning a little earthward. After that, Sandy drew up plans to level out the downstairs as it was and to make a victorian flat upstairs, complete with a dear little patio.

Thus I became involved with the fireman's life in San Francisco. And a wonderful, fascinating life it was and is.

I have been made an Honorary Fire Chief of which I am very proud!

I belong to the Phoenix Society, a group of Fire Buffs affiliated with similar societies throughout the world. They help people who are burned out of their homes, aid them with clothing, money, housing, et cetera.

Mr. Rosecrantz was President of the Pioneers Society at the time of our putting together the little Fire Museum. He told me about the old Knickerbocker Engine and the lovely old hand painted "Tivila," now in the basement of the de Young Museum. He mentioned that the City would be pleased if I would give them house room. Of course, I was glad to do so and that set the tone of the Museum, centering around Lottie Hitchcock Coit, the girl who made history being the mascot of the Knickerbocker Engine. Every time the Knickerbocker went to a fire, there was Lottie atop it! I have photos of Lottie when she was nineteen carrying a whiskey bottle—for the Fireman, of course; then when she was around thirty-five, and then much later when she gave the City the Coit Tower—designed to resemble the nozzle of a Fire Hose! I remember it was a much talked-about affair: would it be a good thing to put on top of Telegraph Hill where in times past men would signal to the ships at sea?

Thus began my love affair with the history of San Francisco and, in particular that of the Fire Depart-

ment. To say it is a love affair is true. I love every single fireman; they are heroes, every man of them, risking his life to save a fellow human being. What more can you ask of anyone? I salute them.

On the walls of the Fire House are photos of the first Fire Chief Quilan, his group of splendid men, looking very determined, very dedicated—early volunteers. Also, I have photos of the Earthquake Fire, of Tetrazinna's singing at Lottis' Fountain on New Years Eve, 1910. This is a particular joy to me, since my grandfather, Benjamin Franklin Chandler, was there and our dear Uncle George Maile—neither knowing the other, of course. But both were eloquent and glowing in their memories of that night. "About 100,000 people stood around the fountain. Tetrazinna sang Annie Laurie, 'Old Lang Syne'. There was such a spirit of unity, fellowship and good feeling that after a little while the entire 100,000 people joined her in singing—a moment never to be forgotten, and cherished always." I wish I had been there!

I am forever grateful to Ralph for many many things but this little Fire House has been such a joy, such a treasure both to myself and to others (the Fire House has been host to countless community events and tours and just good times, often having as many as three affairs a week) that I must say here, "Thank you, Ralph."

One day not too far off, it will be given to National Trust to keep it open to the people of the City.

L. Alice Davis

In the foregoing I have but skimmed over my life with Ralph. But I believe I have given a sense of how he was to me, of my love for him and my admiration. In the pages that follow, others will offer their remembrances. I hope that together our accounts, both the brief and the lengthy, will create an honest and fitting portrait of Ralph K. Davies.

If features of this man remain unetched, perhaps that too is proper, for no one, not even when he lived, could trace out all the fine lines of his character. What we all did recognize were the bold strokes that set him apart from other men, and made him memorable.

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die,
a time to plant, and a time to uproot
the plant
A time to love*

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-2, 8

A Special Report

A Shining Debut For Davies Hall

By Walter Blum

Betty Jane Nevis



Edo de Waart and Louise M. Davies discuss the construction of Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall.

*"With its completion, San Francisco adds the crown jewel
to its glittering new Performing Arts Center."*

■ Not in half a century has there been a pleasure dome like this. A gleaming white palace overlooking the heart of the city, almost a square block in size, air-conditioned and landscaped with great expanses of glass and steel and staircases and elevators and fine-tuned like a great violin.

This is Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall. With its completion, San Francisco adds the crown jewel to its glittering new Performing Arts Center — a 3,000-seat concert auditorium designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Pietro Belluschi and finished at last at an inflation-swollen cost of \$27.5 million.

Opening day has certainly not come easily. Money problems, a construction strike, charges of elitism dogged the project since its conception seven years ago. Nor can anyone tell yet exactly how the hall will "sound." That will have to await the moment Music Director Edo de Waart raises his baton and, before a packed house on September 16, leads the orchestra in Berlioz' *Roman Carnival Overture*.

But for many, the opening of Davies Hall brings forth great, long, happy sighs of relief. Here are two views of the hall before its debut.

May 22, 1980. Nancy Carter, operations manager of the San Francisco Symphony, is standing at what will one day be the front entrance of Davies Hall. She is trying to explain where things will go.

"This will be more or less a carriage entrance," she says. "You'll be able to drive through to drop people off and not obstruct traffic, and if you don't have your tickets you'll come in here, at the main entrance — " she waves a hand at a framework of beams — "stop here at the box office, and then come through the main doors into the theater. Or if you have a reception to go to, you'll enter through this door."

You are about to take a quick tour of the unfinished hall. With you are two people from the Symphony's public relations department, Peter Pastreich, the Symphony manager, who is young and bearded and has on a green hardhat with his name taped on front, and Maestro Edo de Waart, pink-cheeked and smiling and blinking in the wind-whipped sunshine. The Maestro wears a bright red hardhat with his name taped in front.

You try to imagine how the door and the box office will look. It is not easy. Everything is exposed beams and wires and pieces of metal. The floors are uncarpeted; the furniture hasn't arrived yet. It is a little like trying to visualize an elephant when all you have is the trunk.

An old man in a voluminous, brown wine-stained coat stops the group to ask when the reception is going to be. Pastreich looks puzzled. He doesn't know about any reception. The old man stumbles away from the building, leaning into the wind. "He sleeps here," someone says as Nancy Carter leads the way up a staircase and through an unfinished door.

Suddenly, you find yourself in the back of the stage.

The effect is overwhelming. That great ceiling of the auditorium, soaring hundreds of feet above your head; the balcony waiting, inviting you to sit down at an invisible Steinway; the orchestra buzzing and the voices of an audience just beyond sight. Edo makes a loud "click," testing the sound of the hall. He does it again. And again. He looks around. In the center of the stage, the acoustics people have set up an odd device on a tripod with flashing red lights. They call it a Real Time Analyzer.

"It measures as you speak the distribution of energy from the very lowest note on the piano to above the highest," says one of them. He turns to another man. "Can you put it on the BP mode?" They put it on the BP mode. More lights flash, and he claps his hands. "What it says is that the movement of my hands is centering about the same note as a soprano at high C."

Edo studies the device, fascinated. The man generates a noise with a Genie-like gizmo. "You see how long the sound persisted?" he tells the conductor. "That's because there are no seats or carpets in the hall." Edo wants to know what the reverberation time is now. "Well, I'm guessing, but I'd say six or seven seconds."

"It's like a cathedral," Edo exclaims.

"Yes, very Gothic," the sound man says. The sound man says they are going to measure the hall's properties today, and then later when all the furnishings are in they'll do it again to get a comparison. Someone wants to know why the measurements are being taken here onstage, rather than from the audience.

Edo laughs. "He knows that in order to inspire us, it has to sound best onstage."

He admits that this is the first time he's been in on the building of a new concert hall. "Rotterdam has a new one, but I came in a year after it was finished. It was not like this, where you walk in every month, every few weeks and see and hear different things. Even though I didn't change anything in here, just to be part of the thinking process is fantastic."

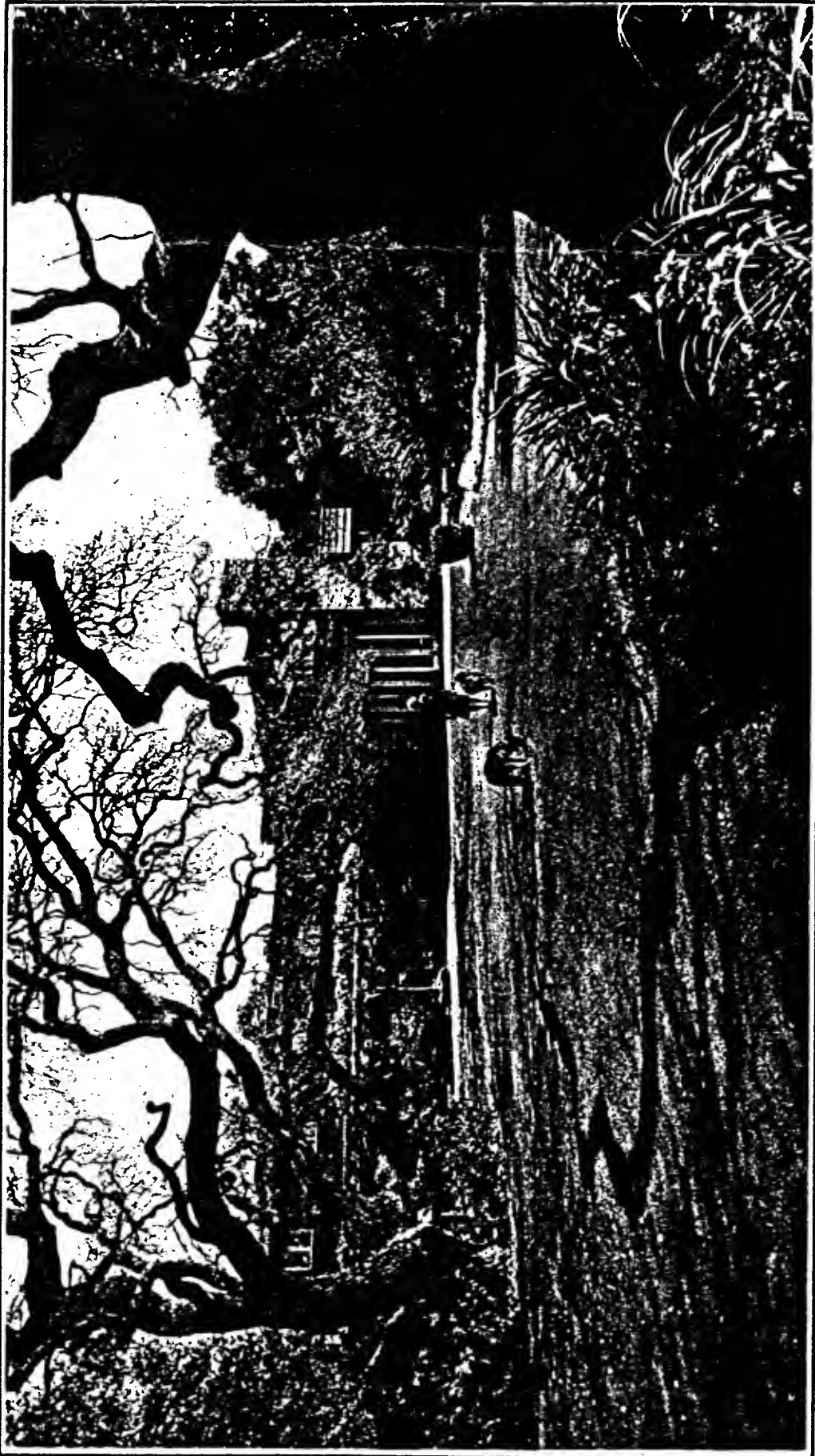
Can he visualize how the hall will be?

"Well, more and more now. What we're still missing are the discs that are going to hang from the ceiling over the stage area, which will bring back the sound to the players and also deflect it to the house. And also the acoustical banners that will hang from those narrow slots. They will change the reverberation time. What I would like to do, eventually, is simulate in rehearsal the concert sound. So that it doesn't sound really good in the morning — then dead in the evening when we have 3,000 people here."

Can they do that?

"Oh, yes," says the acoustician. "And we can also adjust the reverberation time for different kinds of music. Like a romantic symphony versus a classical. . ."

"No, no, no." Edo shakes his head vigorously. "We are not going to do that."



Mrs. Davies strolls with her dogs in the back yard of her Woodside home.

"Well, you have the option."

"Yes... well, the option may be there. But for all our normal concerts we're going to keep one set-up. An artist has to learn to play in a hall, to use it." Edo's face is stern. "If you keep changing things, it's like a violinist who keeps moving the bridge of his instrument for each piece."

Suddenly, he rushes out onto the unfinished stage to where the conductor's podium will be. A workman shouts at him to come back, that the boards are not safe. Edo ignores him. He balances gingerly on the upright two-by-fours. You close your eyes, fearful of being witness to the demise of a world-famous maestro.

But when you look again Edo is back, all in one piece, pink-faced and smiling. The group now moves on to the backstage area. Pastreich shows you Edo's office. You poke your head into the dressing room, the shower and bath.

"This staircase then goes down to the Hana Zellerbach Green Room," Pastreich says. "Right now, in the Opera House, everybody crowds into a tiny little corridor and then into Edo's room, where he might be standing in his underwear. In the new hall, he can change at his leisure, come out and go down to the Green Room where people are waiting for him."

"And after rehearsals, we'll use the Green Room for string quartets," Edo adds, popping his head into more uncompleted rooms.

The tour proceeds into the basement, where Pastreich pauses to show off the men's and women's dressing rooms. Another pause farther on to look at the musicians' lounge.

"This is really nice," Edo says, "because very often you have a piece where not all the musicians are involved in rehearsals and concerts, and now what they do is just hang around backstage, sitting on their instruments. Now there will be a place for them, and there will be intercoms, and that is all part of making musicians feel like human beings for a change."

Finally, you end upstairs in the chaotic jumble that will be the lobby. Before you, through the expanse of window, is the view of the city and the Opera House across Grove Street. In the distance, City Hall's dome looms grandly. In a few months, people will be pouring in here. Glasses will be clinking at the nearby bar. Onstage, the oboist will be sounding his A, ushers will be escorting people to their seats, and Edo de Waart will be getting ready to burst from his dressing room.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" says Edo, with a smile that can only be described as beatific.

June 5, 1980. It is cool and quiet in Woodside today. Out back, sprinklers are playing over the vast, green sprawl of lawn with its gnarled California live oaks and hanging planters and pink and white and yellow blossoms floating perfume into the limpid air.

Louise M. Davies sits at a redwood burl table. A friendly, furry black dog named Cleo nuzzles its head in her hand. Someone asks what breed the dog is. "Oh, Cleo's a little bit of everything," Mrs. Davies smiles. "We got her from the pound. She's a loving baby, don't you think?"

A small, exuberant woman she is with white hair and white shoes, wearing a flowered dress. This afternoon, her mind is occupied with a party at the house on Sunday. Two hundred people will be coming. She hopes the weather will hold up.

"It's my eightieth birthday," she says. "Actually, it was a couple of weeks ago, but we're celebrating on Sunday. It's just astounding to me. You never feel any different. I think when you get to be about fifty or sixty, you stop thinking about age because you can't do anything about it. You just don't let it concern you any more."

This is the Louise M. Davies for whom the magnificent concert hall on Van Ness Avenue is named, the widow of Ralph K. Davies, who was a top executive with Standard Oil for many years and board chairman of American President Lines. She has lived here in Woodside since 1940 in this redwood and stone house with the birds and the trees and the gardens and lawns.

She lives well. There is a house in Tahoe, and other properties, including a former firehouse in San Francisco which she had restored to pristine condition and which she will someday give to the National Trust. But what she is thinking of now is the Symphony Hall that bears her name.

Has she been in it?

"Oh, honey, many times!" she exclaims. "I take people through all the time. Although I haven't been since I got back. I've been away for five weeks. I took an APL freighter to Japan and Hong Kong and Jakarta and Bali. You see, before I get too old to remember, I want to write a little story for my grandchildren, because they'll never know my kind of life. But to write, you have to concentrate and not have too much else around. So I took a freighter, and that gave me lots of time."

What does she think of the hall?

"I think it's absolutely thrilling, magnificent." The other day, she says, Peter Pastreich took a visiting conductor through the hall. "That man said that, as far as he was concerned, this is going to be the greatest music hall in the world. Incidentally, Peter plays the trumpet. Did you know that? He was in the Yale band. He said he might play a note. I think being eighty, I deserve a trumpet note, don't you agree?"

How did she happen to give \$5 million to start the hall off?

"Because I had it." Her eyes twinkle. "That's one thing. You don't give it unless you have it... Somebody told me that nobody in San Francisco had ever given that much money



"I think music is a universal language," says Mrs. Davies. "Everybody can enjoy music."

in one fell swoop . . . It goes back to something my husband told me when he knew he had only two months to live. We had lots of talks then, and he said at one point, it's better to do one big thing than a thousand little things."

She reflects for a moment. "But then, what do you have money for unless it's to give away? My children are well-provided for — too well-provided for, in fact. I worry about that. So did my husband. You know, if you're handed things it makes for problems. If you were given a million dollars, how hard would you work?"

Is she surprised they named the hall for her?

"Well, they came to me and said, 'You gave the seed money, and nobody else has given anything like this,' and I said, 'Isn't that a little presumptuous?' I mean, after all, we already have the Davies Center — my husband took over the chairmanship of the Franklin Hospital, and now there's the Ralph K. Davies Center — and now here I come along and I'm willing to let this be called Louise M. Davies Hall, but it really is in honor of *him*. I mean, he gave me all that money, you know."

Is she a Symphony-goer, then?

"Honey, since 1934 I've had a season ticket! Wouldn't you call me a Symphony-goer?"

What sort of music does she like?

She laughs and repeats the question. "What kind of music? Well, I'm not very up on rock." She laughs again. "I do like Mahler. Some of it thrills me more than others. Edo

loves to play Mahler. He's good at it, that's why he does it." Suddenly, she looks up. "Lucy, come here!" A pretty blonde young woman in a bathing suit comes over. "This is my granddaughter. She's been telling me about her professor at the University of Iowa. He's Scottish, isn't he?"

"You're supposed to be having an interview, grandma," Lucy protests.

"Oh, that's all right," says Mrs. Davies with a slightly imperious wave of her hand. "I'll bet you haven't had any lunch. Would you like a cup of coffee? I would. Lucy, go put the tea kettle on. Aren't you cold? You'd better go put some pants on. After we get the coffee, we'll go up to the pool. It's warmer there."

The gardener's German shepherd comes over. His name for some reason is Skylab. Cleo greets him, and the two dogs nuzzle playfully.

"I grew up in California," Mrs. Davies goes on to say. "I was born in Quincy, Plumas County, which is way up north. Are you a native son? No? Well, hardly any of us are. I come from a lot of ranchers, farmers. I've lived in the Bay Area since 1932, though, and we lived on the Stanford campus for about three years. We bought first at Tahoe. We have a beautiful place there. You must come up some time."

The conversation adjourns to the pool, which overlooks the hills to the west. There are lemon trees and deck chairs. A large wasp floats in the water. The sun is warm and bright.

What does she think of the orchestra now?

"Well, as Peter Pastreich said the other day, it's a good orchestra but it can be better. I don't know. I'm not that good a musician to tell. All I can say is that a conductor means a great deal to an orchestra. Like a master painter.

"I lived through the other fellow, he was perfect. The Frenchman. What was his name? He was here for fifteen years. Monteux. He never played a disturbing note. He was so good. He was a perfectionist. But there's something about me — or I should say human nature — that although we strive for perfection, we don't want it all the time. The getting there is important, and that's why I think this is exciting. The fact that we are developing still."

Mrs. Davies beams in the sun. She recalls her years as a music lover. "In the Opera House, I sit in Box Z for the Symphony," she says. "I've gone through all the conductors. The first one was Alfred Hertz. Don't forget, I'm eighty now." She pauses to reflect on what it all means. "This may sound kind of trite, but I think music is a universal language. Everybody can enjoy music, and everybody does. It's a lifting of the heart. It's a lifting of the whole being.

"But music is not only something that inspires you. It's a whole realm in which people can reside," she says as Lucy comes from the house with coffee and tea on a tray. □

Louise M. Davies and the Joy of Giving

by Frances Moffat

“You’ve heard about the joy of cooking, the joy of sex, and the joy of music. Well, I want to tell you about the joy of giving.”

The audience at a recent San Francisco Press Club luncheon erupted in laughter and applause for Louise M. Davies, the 84-year-old patron of the San Francisco Symphony. She had given \$5 million toward the building of the concert hall that bears her name; and last spring, nearly four years after the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall opened at the Performing Arts Center, she had again practiced the “joy of giving” with a \$3 million gift to the orchestra’s endowment fund.

“She simply did not have to make that second gift,” says Katherine

(Mrs. W. John) Buchanan, vice president of the San Francisco Symphony and co-chairman of the current endowment drive. “But that’s the way Louise is. She is deeply involved with the symphony and exceedingly well informed about it. She gets a day-to-day report and knows about everything from fundraisers to labor relations.”

Katherine Buchanan lives next door to Mrs. Davies in Woodside, an upper-class community of country homes 35 miles south of San Francisco. When she and Brayton Wilbur Jr., president of the Symphony Association, called on the music patron to thank her for the endowment gift, the outcome was typical: “Louise turned the conversation around, and by the time we left, she was thanking us.”

Mrs. Buchanan says the endowment drive is now at \$13 million, with a goal of \$22 million. “With the more than \$12 million we already had, this will put us in a league with other big cities like Chicago, Boston, and New

York. All except Pittsburgh, which is ahead of everyone with \$44 million.”

Income from Mrs. Davies’ gift is earmarked to pay for guest conductors in whom the donor takes great interest. She met Herbert Blomstedt when he was guest conductor with the San Francisco Symphony in February of 1984, and she is delighted that he has been selected to succeed Edo de Waart as music director next September.

“Brayton took me backstage to meet him, and before I could say I loved his Beethoven, he said, ‘This is the most beautiful hall I have ever seen.’ I liked that, of course, but I don’t think it was just flattery. I think he’s going to be a great asset.”

The Press Club luncheon in November, which also honored Oakland Symphony Music Director Richard Buckley, is just one of countless events at which Mrs. Davies has found herself in the spotlight since she became an overnight celebrity at the time of the hall’s opening in September of 1980. Until then she

Frances Moffat is a freelance writer and former society editor of the San Francisco Chronicle.



M. Davies

was best known as the "grande dame with the firehouse," a generous but quiet philanthropist. She and her husband, the late Ralph K. Davies—chairman of the board of the Natomas Company and president of both the American President Lines and Standard Oil of California—gave to the San Francisco Opera, Stanford University, various Catholic charities and schools, and Franklin Hospital, site of the Ralph K. Davies Medical Center. And Mrs. Davies, a lover of music all her life, went on the San Francisco Symphony's Board of Governors in 1976.

A Half Century of Symphony Patronage

She was born on May 23, 1900 in Quincy, a small rural town in Northern California. Her family lived briefly in Seattle and Sacramento before settling in Oakland, where she spent her youth. She was graduated from the Sisters of Mary Convent and worked as a stenographer before her

marriage in 1925. The couple established their love for the San Francisco peninsula in the early 1930s, when they lived on the Stanford campus while Mr. Davies was a consulting professor at the Graduate School of Business. In 1940 they built their redwood and stone home on 23 acres in Woodside, where their three daughters were raised.

"I went to my first concert in 1930," she says, "when Alfred Hertz was conductor and the performances were given in the Civic Auditorium." Two years later the War Memorial Opera House opened, and the orchestra started to alternate with opera in the use of the building, an arrangement that became less and less satisfactory with the years. A new concert hall was badly needed, not only to permit both opera and symphony to extend their seasons, but to provide space for performing arts events that were bypassing San Francisco for lack of a facility.

In 1965, a \$29 million bond issue

to build a hall was turned down by voters, and it was clear that other methods of raising funds were needed. In 1970 Mayor Joseph Alioto appointed a 25-member committee of civic leaders to study what was called the Performing Arts Center Project. The co-chairman was R. Gwin Follis, chairman of the board of Standard Oil of California, a close business and personal friend of Ralph K. Davies, and a key figure in how the Davies widow handled her inheritance.

"Gwin Follis is really the reason I gave to the symphony," she says. "We were talking about the money that Ralph left me. I said I wanted to do something important with it and he said, 'You've always been interested in the symphony, and now the symphony needs that new hall.' I said, 'Alright, that's what I'll do.'"

Samuel B. Stewart, a retired vice president of the Bank of America and president of the Sponsors of the Performing Arts Center, takes up the story: "When I heard she was inter-



In the foyer of the concert hall that bears her name, Mrs. Davies dances with friend John Renshaw at the Black and White Ball, a fundraising event for the San Francisco Symphony.

"Sharing the firehouse on San Francisco's Russian Hill is part of the joy of giving for Louise Davies. She's likely to thank the people who want to use it, just as she thanks those who are grateful for the millions she gave to the San Francisco Symphony."

the time, says, "There is no question but that her gift put the fund drive over." (Stewart and his committee raised \$27 million, the original estimate for the building, from 6,000 individuals, corporations, and foundations. "Because of inflation and changes as we went along," he says, "it came to \$40 million." He adds that the extra money has been raised, and now he is working on the endowment drive.)

Mrs. Davies has subscribed to the San Francisco Symphony's Thursday afternoon series since 1934. Until recently, she drove in herself, but now her gardener plays chauffeur or she drives in with Katherine Buchanan—if their schedules jibe, and they frequently do. During the week of the Press Club luncheon, Mrs. Davies played Mrs. Santa at the orchestra's annual children's Christmas party, posed for a *Town and Country* Magazine photo, and was honored at a Century Club luncheon where a "This Is Your Life" skit was staged for the club's most celebrated (and one of its oldest) members.

"I get invitations and applications," she says, musing over the way her life has changed. "I never thought about being a celebrity, and it's more than I expected. But I'm having more fun and I'm busier than ever. I guess it's better to be busy than not have enough to do." She tried having a secretary, she says, "but by the time I got through telling her what to do, I might as well have done it myself."

One of her chores is keeping track of bookings for the firehouse on San Francisco's Russian Hill that she bought at public auction in the mid-60s and restored into a fire department museum and *pied-à-terre* for her overnight stays in the city. "It's such a great place for parties that everyone wants to use it," she says. "There are fire department people, the St. Andrew's Society, St. Mary's Hospital, gourmet groups, and lots more."

Sharing the firehouse is part of the joy of giving for Louise Davies. She's likely to thank the people who want to use it, just as she thanks those who are grateful for the millions she gave to the San Francisco Symphony. She has a disarming way of handling the attention that came late in life. In a television interview on the eve of the opening of Davies Hall, she was asked why she had given the \$5 million.

"Because I had it," she replied. **S**

ested, I phoned and she invited me to lunch. I brought along Pietro Belluschi, the original architect for the building, and they hit it off. When we got down to talking money, she asked me how much we needed, and I said I thought the pacesetter's gift should be \$5 million. She said, 'That's more than I had in mind,' but told me she would

think about it. Later, when my wife and I called on her, she said the most she could do was \$4 million. I said, 'I'm certainly not going to turn down \$4 million, but I hope you don't mind if I come back for more.' I did—and she eventually gave us another million." Lawrence V. Metcalf, who was president of the Symphony Association at



Valley oak leaves (*Quercus lobata*) saturated by spring rains

Photo by Daniel D'Aquino

The Chairmen's Council,
the leadership group
of the California
Nature Conservancy, welcomes

Mrs. Louise Davies

as a member and friend. The Council helps chart the course to protect California's vanishing natural heritage. The generosity of Chairmen Council members will allow the Conservancy to protect the best that remains of California's valley oak forests, rare native wild flowers, free flowing trout streams and precious natural lands.

J. S. Phillips
Chairman Council

Peter Seligman
Peter Seligman, Chairman

EQUAL RIGHTS ADVOCATES

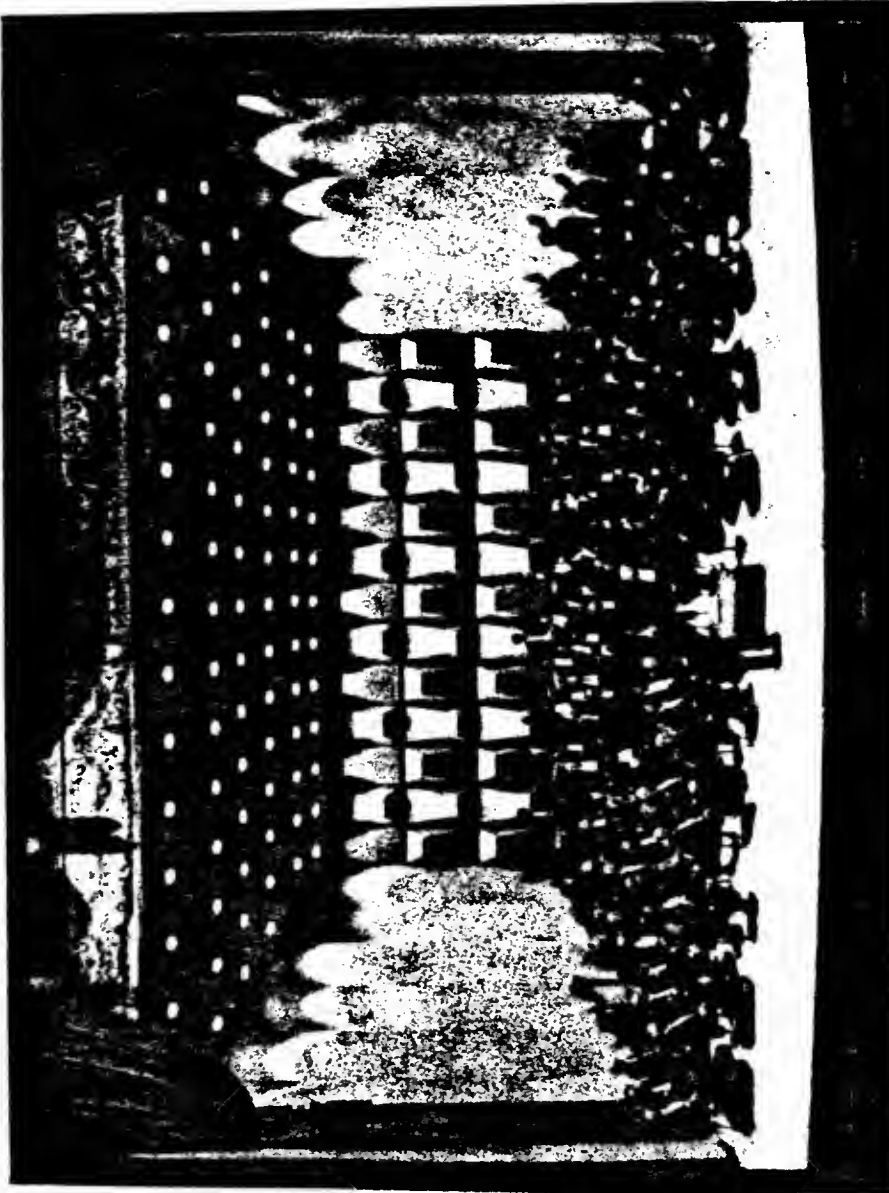
Presented to

LOUISE M. DAVIES

*for her outstanding contributions to the
support and development of the arts and
culture in the San Francisco Bay Area.*

22 JUNE 1983

*Dedicated to equal rights, equal opportunities and equal protection
under the law for all women.*



*And the
 Happy birthday to Louise M. Davies,
 with warm wishes on her eightieth birthday
 from the members of the San Francisco Symphony*

Proclamation

WHEREAS: San Francisco is justly renowned for its amazing assemblage of women who possess great talents, practically unlimited energies and the kind of spirit which inspires others; and

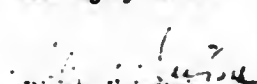
WHEREAS: LOUISE M. DAVIES is an outstanding example of those San Francisco women who dedicate their lives to the progress and prosperity of our entire community--a leader whose diverse activities include the San Francisco Symphony and Opera, the Catholic Youth Organization, the Ralph K. Davies Medical Center at Franklin Hospital, and the Phoenix Society; and

WHEREAS: LOUISE M. DAVIES is also a woman of marvellous personal warmth who cares tremendously for the well-being of others, and who has given and continues to give generously of her time and abilities to promote and enhance San Francisco's overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS: Many friends, loved ones and admirers of LOUISE M. DAVIES are gathering on Friday, October 21, 1983 at the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women's Second Annual Celebration of the San Francisco Woman, where she is this year's HONORED GUEST and where her many accomplishments and those of all San Francisco women will be praised and recognized; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT I, Dianne Feinstein, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, do hereby proclaim October 21, 1983 as LOUISE M. DAVIES DAY IN SAN FRANCISCO and do commend her on behalf of those future generations of women who will find inspired civic leadership in the achievements, generosity and warmth of LOUISE M. DAVIES.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed this nineteenth day of October, nineteen hundred and eighty-three.


Dianne Feinstein
Mayor





His Holiness John Paul I
 paternally imparts
 his Apostolic Blessing to

Louise M. Davies
 Dame of Malta

as a pledge of divine graces and favors
 on the occasion of her 80th birthday.
 May 23, 1980

The Pontifical Blessing was given on May 23, 1980.

The University of San Francisco

Degree of DOCTOR OF MUSIC *Honoris Causa*



DOCTOR OF MUSIC, patroness of the arts, San Franciscan extraordinary, Louise Davies has, through her generous gifts and quiet benefactions, epitomized the magnanimous spirit of the City of Saint Francis. Future historians will find the imprint of this gentle, unassuming woman everywhere in our City. Her persistence, frequently anonymous, support has quickened and nourished scores of community, cultural and religious endeavors in the San Francisco Bay area.

A Dame of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Louise Davies is at once a Daughter of the Church and a Daughter of the Arts. In her is epitomized truth seeking beauty and beauty seeking truth. In thought, word and deed, she has borne witness throughout her lifetime to her belief that spiritual values and values of art can energize each other, making possible an even more bold and compelling quest for Him Who is the Author of All Beauty and Truth.

Her name graces the beautiful Performing Arts Center which her generosity made a reality. She has established a Forum at our University to encourage students, scholars and other American leaders to explore together those issues of ethical and human values so vital in the face of our fascination with ever more complex technology. Through her kindness, our St. Ignace Institute flourishes in the pursuit of humanistic education.

While her name adorns a great building and an intellectual forum, more importantly the name of Louise Davies adorns the collective heart of San Francisco. She has devoted herself to making our city, for all of us, one radiant with spiritual and artistic energy, nurturing its citizens through art, music and religion.

It is for her gifts and, even more, for the spirit in which those gifts have been given, that the University of San Francisco honors this remarkable woman. In recognition of her distinguished service to the arts and to our University and our City, the University of San Francisco is proud to confer upon

Louise M. Davies

the degree of Doctor of Music, *Honoris Causa*, with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. Given at San Francisco in the State of California this twentieth day of May in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the University the one hundred and twenty-ninth.



City and County of San Francisco

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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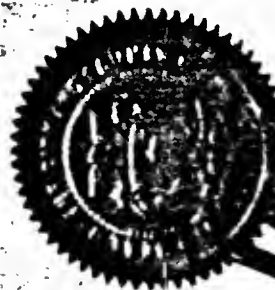
I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
certificate was duly authorized pursuant
to resolution adopted by the Board of Supervisors
of the City and County of San Francisco at its
meeting held on April 18, 1932

W. H. Harrison
President of the Board

W. H. Harrison
Chief of the Board

W. H. Harrison
Member of the Board

San Francisco



L. M. Davies

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